The Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience in the Luxury Retail Environment

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

in the Faculty of Humanities

2015

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Word Count: 87,968

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Abstract

Gemma Street, Doctor of Business Administration, “The Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience in the Luxury Retail Environment”, The University of Manchester, 30.9.15.

This thesis explores the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment. Three research objectives seek firstly, to gain an understanding of the meaning of curation in luxury retailing and identify the role, purpose and value to luxury retailers; secondly, to explore the different ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment by examining sole brand and multi brand luxury retailers, and lastly, to identify how curation is brought to life through the curatorial roles within luxury retailers.

In light of increasing global competitive pressures and fast-paced technology advances associated with mobile devices, the rise of omnichannel retailing has led luxury brands to be ubiquitous, with the resulting challenge for luxury retailers to develop seamless and experiential omnichannel brand experiences in order to continue to differentiate and grow. However, there is a paucity of literature regarding the design and development of luxury brand experiences, suggesting a gap in the literature. In addition, ‘curation’, a term traditionally associated with museology, is being increasingly used in the business environment in terms of creating differentiated experiences or collection of products both online and in-store. Little attention has been paid to curation in the literature, with the result of limited understanding of the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience, suggesting a second gap to be addressed in the research.

The research was an investigative, qualitative and thematic analysis-based study. The data collection focused on face-to-face semi-structured interviews with 17 senior professionals from the luxury retail and cultural environments in the UK. Braun and Clarke’s (2006) Six Stages of Thematic Analysis and NVivo software were utilised to analyse the data, resulting in 9 key themes.

My original contribution to the literature is this research is one of the first empirical studies to explore the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment, resulting in three key contributions. Firstly, the role of curation is an influential one in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment and is manifested in four forms of curation across sole brand and multi brand luxury retailers. Secondly, curation in luxury retail has evolved from the traditional art-historian discipline of curation and is emerging as a new discipline and modus operandi in its own right, creating strategic, organisational, financial and experiential value. Thirdly, a strategic curation management toolkit consisting of three strategic frameworks was developed that contributes to both the brand literature and management practice. The toolkit provides managers with a common vernacular to develop their curatorial capabilities and identify strategic opportunities where they can harness curation as a strategy to design and develop omnichannel luxury brand experiences as a route to competitive advantage and build a platform for future growth.

Declaration

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Acknowledgement

I would like to express my sincere thanks and gratitude to my two supervisors, Dr Anthony Grimes and Mr John Pal at Manchester Business School for their insight, knowledge and support throughout the research period.

Dedication

To my wonderful, loving family, Tim, Venetia, Aurelia and my parents, Jennifer and Michael Harman, thank you for your unlimited and unconditional understanding, patience, support and kindness throughout this entire journey.

For Tim – for your love and your generosity regarding the time spent doing practical research.

For Venetia and Aurelia – I love you and hope that Mama has done you proud.

1. Introduction

1.1. A Summary of Key Concepts from Extant Literature

Brand

The definition of a brand has been greatly researched with various interpretations existing (e.g. Aaker, 1994; Aaker, 1997; Alexander, 2009; Kapferer, 2008; Simoes and Dibb, 2001; Holt, 2004; Keller, 2003; de Chernatony et al, 2010). A brand is referenced in the literature as more than a visual identity but as a psychological construct held in the minds of all those aware of the brand and used by consumers to express and validate their own self-identity (e.g. Berger and Heath, 2007; Kylander and Stone, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). For further reference regarding the various definitions please see Chapter 2.2.1.

Brand Experience

Brand experience is referred to in the literature as a series of touchpoints a consumer may have with a brand through a variety of multi-sensory channels that aim to result in a positive emotional connection with the brand (e.g. Kim et al, 2007; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Atwal and Williams, 2009; Brakus et al, 2009; Pine and Gilmore, 1998) For further reference of the various definitions please see Chapter 2.2.3.

Curation

Various definitions exist in the museology literature regarding curation and differ according to the type of cultural institution, mode of exhibition and visitor experience (e.g. Hooper-Greenhill, 2011; Lord, 2014; O'Neill, 2012; Roppola, 2014) Curation is referenced as a distinct practice of mediation and production of experience through the forging of new ideas and facilitating public engagement with them (e.g. O'Neill, 2012; Arnold, 2009). Please see Chapter 2.3.2 for further reference. Regarding a definition of curation in the brand literature, curation is referred to as a more traditional practice based on permanent collections in museums, involving the acquisition, care, research, design, layout and the imagining and construction of discourses (Ames, 1992). Please see Chapter 2.3.3 for further reference.

Luxury Brands

It is recognised in the literature that various definitions of a luxury brand exist (e.g. Heine et al, 2014; Tynan et al, 2010; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Roper et al, 2011; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009). A luxury brand is referenced in the literature as an image in the mind of the consumer that comprises of associations about a high level of price, quality, aesthetics, rarity and a high degree of non-functional associations and therefore also communicates the status of the consumer (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Tynan et al, 2010; Heine et al, 2014) Please see Chapter 2.2.2 for further reference.

Luxury Brand Retailers

Luxury brand retailers in this thesis are defined by two types, a sole brand luxury retailer (thereafter referred to as "SBLR") and a multi brand luxury retailer (thereafter referred to as "MBLR"). Regarding a SBLR, it is referred to as an organisation that designs, manufacturers and sells luxury goods under a sole brand (e.g. Nobbs et al, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). Regarding a MBLR, it is referred to as an organisation that sells a selection of multiple luxury brands, such as a luxury department store, a specialist luxury brand store or online luxury retailers (Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012). Both types of luxury retailer sell luxury brands across different lifestyle categories, for example, apparel (womenswear, menswear), accessories, footwear, as well as other lifestyle areas such as home, books and beauty (e.g. Kapferer, 2015). Please see Chapter 2.1.2 for further reference.

Omnichannel

Omnichannel retailing is observed in the literature as an emerging and disruptive new stage of retailing in the retail environment (Rigby, 2011). It is defined as a customer-centric, multichannel approach that provides a seamless shopping experience simultaneously across all channels to the customer e.g. mobile device, telephone, physical store or from a desktop. It differs from 'multiple channel retailing', which is defined as a number of siloed channel structures that operate independently (e.g. Brynjolfsson et al, 2013; Verhoef et al, 2015; Herhausen et al, 2015; Rigby, 2011).

1.2. Research Topic, Aim and Objectives

It is observed that the luxury goods market is small but hugely significant from an economic perspective (Bain & Company, 2014) and continues to outpace growth in other consumer goods categories (Kapferer, 2015). Much of the economic growth has been driven to date by increased wealth levels and expenditure in the BRIC and MINT countries, however, drivers of future growth are claimed to no longer be dependent on geography (e.g. Fulgoni, 2014; Brynjolfsson et al, 2013).[1] The rise of omnichannel retailing allows luxury brands to be ubiquitous (e.g. Liu et al; Arrigo, 2014) and reduces the ability of geography and ignorance to shield retailers from competition (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013). Online retailing represents the fastest growing retail sector, and, combined with the ever-increasing number of technology advances relating to mobile devices and mcommerce, pressure is on luxury retailers to continually evolve and deliver seamless omnichannel retailing experiences that are customer-centric (Fulgoni, 2014).

This suggests that for competitive advantage and future growth luxury retailers will increasingly need to focus on omni-channel experiential luxury, "the opportunity to engage in meaningful experiences anywhere in the world" (Kapferer, 2015: p. 15). A global network of physical flagship stores, or a digital-only retailer strategy, may no longer be sufficient to build and reinforce luxury brand positions, as luxury brand retailers must offer an exceptional and integrated brand experience across its entire brand universe (Arrigo, 2014). Further, as high growth luxury markets, such as China; which have dominated luxury growth in the past 15 years, continue to mature, tastes change and consumers are no longer are satisfied with big flagship brand stores and logos, and instead, expect a authentic brand experience that provides a narrative and an emotional link (Anderlini, 2015).[2] Brand experience, as a means to develop positive and long-lasting emotional connections with consumers, has been identified as a fundamental part of the luxury brand retailer strategy to differentiate itself and build brand equity for future growth (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008). Therefore, how luxury brand retailers develop seamless omnichannel brand experiences that will enable them to create a unique position and create value for future growth is a subject matter worthy of attention (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013).

It is observed that 'curation' is a term that is increasingly used in both industry and the wider population, often as a reference to "imparting of value" through creating a refined and considered, holistic and differentiated experience or collection of products, and one, therefore, that appears to no longer solely belong to the world of museums (e.g. Balzer, 2015: p. 3; Williams, 2009). In 2013, in an article in the FT regarding how global luxury retail brands

[1] The acronym "BRIC" refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China and "MINT" refers to Mexico, Indonesia, Nigeria and Turkey

[2] Source: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/bad26d7e-f591-11e4-bc6d-00144feab7de.html#axzz3yA96mUjx (Last Accessed: 21.9.15)

are evolving, it was observed how "the best multi-brand sites have become curators rather than retailers" (Felsted, 2013)[3]. In the digital, hyper-connected age, luxury retailers are investing in digital technologies and their online brand propositions to expand their footprint and continue to grow.[4] However, in doing so, online luxury retailers are referring to curation as a means to filter and cut through the "infoglut" for consumers and differentiate themselves by presenting a "curated" brand offering (e.g. Maguire and Matthews, 2012; Rosenbaum, 2011; Brynjolfsson et al, 2013). In the context of physical stores, the luxury retail industry's adoption of curation is also evidenced by a number of public partnerships with curators in the development of in-store curated displays, installations and physical experiences. Drawing upon curatorial vision and expertise to produce unique physical experiences, luxury retailers are pursuing dual objectives of driving footfall in-store vis-à-vis the rise of online shopping (particularly in light of the considerable investment made in physical flagship stores by SBLRs) and ensuring the luxury brand remains differentiated, innovative and current.[5]

A further example of the increasing prevalence of the term "curation" in luxury retail may also be observed in the nature and frequency in which it is referred to in multiple luxury retailer brand and marketing communications. The usage of the term "curated" is deployed in the context of presenting a superior and coveted brand offering or proposition, with references made to curated collections and experiences.[6] In addition, luxury retailers are drawing upon the associations of art and cultural curation, relating to connoisseurship, expertise and aesthetic authority, and evolving into cultural intermediaries and legitimisers of taste, by investing in "expert curatorial" fashion and lifestyle sites, for example, Louis Vuitton and Nowness.[7] However, despite the growing presence and importance of curation in luxury retailing, scant attention has been paid to curation in the literature to date, with the result of limited understanding regarding how curation contributes to the design and development of brand experience.[8] Firstly, the number of authors who reference curation is limited and secondly, those that do, refer only to SBLRs, suggesting a considerable gap in the literature as they fail to address MBLRs. Thirdly, the literature only refers to curation, or museological techniques associated with permanent art collection exhibitions, through the lens of a new luxury retail model (e.g. Joy et al's (2014) hybrid store-cultural institution, "M(Art)World") or in

[3] Source: http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/f4ea9826-b711-11e2-a249-00144feabdc0.html#axzz3mPh6J4h8 (Last Accessed 21.9.15)

[4] An example is Liberty's investment into its digital brand experience. Source: http://www.greenlightdigital.com/blog/press/liberty-appoints-greenlight-digital-to-develop-new-commerce-site/ (Last Accessed 21.9.15)

[5] For example: Curator Jane Withers and Selfridges collaboration on Ocean Plastic, Tom Dixon's curated Multiplex temporary department store with Selfridges, and the "Curated Shelves" collaboration between artists and Louis Vuitton

[6] Please see Appendix 1 for examples of the usage of the term "curated" in online luxury retailer brand and marketing communications.

[7] Nowness, an online branded content magazine founded by Louis Vuitton in 2010, is described as possessing curatorial expertise in fashion, beauty, food and travel and "a movement for excellence in storytelling". Source: https://www.nowness.com/about (Last Accessed 21.9.15)

[8] Please see Appendix 2 for an overview of ABI/INFORM and EBSCO references in the literature regarding curation in the context of brand experience and luxury retail

the realms of an alternative retail strategy that relates to adoration and the charisma of the artistic director (Dion and Arnould, 2011).

In light of the limited coverage in the brand literature regarding curation, this thesis examined curation in the context of its origins, the cultural environment. It was observed that multiple perspectives exist regarding its definition as a discipline due to its close association with the function and form of the cultural institution itself, which was identified to be evolving (e.g. Roppola, 2014; Simon, 2010). It was noted that the traditional perspective of curation based on possession of scholarly knowledge and curatorial activities such as preservation, collection and didactic display of artifacts in permanent collections within a museum, is changing as new forms of exhibition develop, such as the temporary ideas-led exhibition (e.g. Lord, 2014; Kirchberg and Trondle, 2012; Dernie, 2006). Consequently, curation as a discipline and curatorial activities are also evolving, with less focus on the delivery of a contemplative, unmediated and passive object-oriented visitor experience to one that focuses on the mediation of understanding through co-created, multi-sensory, immersive experiences. Looking through the lens of curation in the cultural context, a number of similarities were observed between the ways in which luxury retailers and cultural institutions approach the design and development of experiences. However, it was observed that there is little in the literature in terms of an empirical investigation that draws out these similarities or explores the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience, suggesting a gap in the literature and an opportunity for research.

The research aim of this thesis is to explore the role of the curator in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment and, by doing so, address the identified gaps in the existing literature to date, make a contribution to the literature and identify the implications for management practice. To meet this aim, this thesis is focused on three research objectives, which are highlighted below:

1. To explore the meaning of curation in luxury retail, in order to understand and highlight the role, purpose and value of curation for luxury brand retailers

2. To explore and identify the ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment, in order to gain an understanding of how curatorial activities contribute and add value to the delivery of a luxury brand experience

3. To explore the nature in which curation is brought to life through curatorial roles within luxury retail organisations

1.3. The Research Question

The research question is outlined below:

"What is the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment?"

1.4. Justification for Topic Choice

Justification for the topic choice is based on two different perspectives, academic and business. These two perspectives are now reviewed.

1.4.1. Academic Justification

The academic justification refers to paucity in the literature of two key areas, curation in the luxury retail environment and the role of curation in the design and development of a luxury brand experience. The lack of attention in the literature has resulted in a limited understanding regarding its meaning, how it is manifested and contributes to the design and development of brand experience. In the light of the rise of omnichannel retailing and the continual requirement for luxury retailers to differentiate and innovate in order to survive (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Kapferer, 2015), the exploration of new or emerging brand experience strategies is an exercise that arguably cannot be overlooked. Brand experience has been identified as critical to the luxury retailer strategy in order to deliver the brand promise as communicated and ultimately, build brand equity (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008). The challenge for the luxury brand retailer is to find ways it can continually design and develop highly differentiated and holistic brand experiences (Kapferer, 2015), which curation may facilitate. In light of the very few studies that refer to curation in the context of luxury brand experience, it is hoped that this research is firstly, a step towards revealing the nature and extent of the role of curation in luxury retail. Secondly, how the role of curation may contribute to the design and development of luxury brand experience and illuminate new insights that act as a springboard for future inquiry.

1.4.2. Business Justification

From a business perspective, it is suggested that this research is important and can contribute to management practice in two key ways. Firstly, to understand the context of the usage of the term "curation" in luxury retail and identify, for example, whether the use of the term is a carefully constructed differentiation strategy as a route to competitive advantage and

future growth, or merely a semantic or zeitgeist trend that will pass. Or, whether 'curation' is a term used by luxury retailer marketers to depict added value to retail display, through suggestion of specialist knowledge, selection and edit. The exploration of how and why the term 'curation' is being used in the luxury retail environment will help identify its purpose and acknowledge the value it generates, and therefore, serve to highlight the implications for management and the development of differentiated luxury brand experiences.

Secondly, the identification of how curation is manifested in the luxury retail environment may help to illuminate how curation can contribute to the design and development of a differentiated luxury brand strategy. The implications for management refer to transparency of where value associated with curation may reside or is created across organisational functions, roles or processes, which is suggested to be important in light of the rise of omnichannel retailing. This may lead to formal acknowledgement of curatorial roles and practices and provide organisations with the opportunity to invest in different types of curatorial practices as a new modus operandi to deliver differentiated experiences. Importantly, this research may act as a first step to help organisations identify the existence of curatorial activities and enhance their ability to design and develop brand experiences that support an omnichannel retail strategy and continue to differentiate in an ever-increasing competitive market.

1.5. Thesis Outline

The thesis is structured to address the research aim and the three research objectives. Chapter 2, the literature review focuses on two key sections. The first section provides an introduction to the luxury retail market, followed by an examination of brands, luxury brands and brand experience. Attention then turns towards curation in the second section. The role of the curator and the various observed definitions of curation in the cultural environment are reviewed first in order to provide context for the review of the role of the curator in the luxury retail environment thereafter.

In Chapter 3 the research methodology, design and method are presented. This is followed by an overview of the data collection and analysis in Chapter 4, which leads on to the findings of the research in Chapters 5-7. The findings consist of 9 key themes, which are presented, in three findings chapters. The first findings chapter presents themes 1-4 and is concerned with the broader environment, regarding the observed evolution of consumer desires and trends, and how and why curation has come to be seen as a relevant and potentially valuable concept in luxury retailing. The second findings chapter presents themes 5-7 and builds on the first set of findings in terms of how the concept of curation is understood in luxury retailing. The themes also compare understanding of curation in the luxury retail and cultural

environments. Finally, the third findings chapter presents themes 8 and 9 regarding how curation is manifested in luxury retailing practice, in terms of the curatorial activities and roles observed. In light of the focus regarding how curation manifests itself in luxury retail today, and how it influences the design and development of brand experience, this findings section represents the area that will be the main focus of the discussion chapter.

Chapter 8 focuses on a critical discussion of the findings, drawing on themes identified in the literature review in Chapter 2. This chapter is structured in three sections, with each section focusing on addressing a research objective. Chapter 8.2 addresses the first research question regarding the role, purpose and value of curation in luxury retailing. Chapter 8.3. focuses on the second research question regarding the ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment. Finally, Chapter 8.4 is concerned with the third research question regarding how curation is brought to life through curatorial roles in luxury retail. Each discussion chapter concludes with a summary of the contributions this research makes in light of existing gaps in the literature and highlights opportunities for future research.

The concluding chapter, Chapter 9, highlights the key contributions of the research and implications for management. It also discusses limitations of the research and future avenues of research.

1.6. Methodology

The research focus and philosophical approach was guided by an interpretive epistemological position, founded on the understanding that the curation of the design and development of brand experience in luxury retail and museum retail environments is subjective and underpinned by observation and interpretation (e.g. Cassell and Symon, 2004; Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). The research adopts an inductive approach and focuses on qualitative methods that maximise reflexivity and the development of a holistic perspective.

The data collection focused on five semi-structured questions that were discussed with 17 interview participants over a period of 1-2 hours. The interview participants included senior professionals across 3 industries: cultural institutions; luxury retailers and curator consultants. The interviews were transcribed and utilised Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Stages of Thematic Analysis in order to code the data using NVivo software.

2. Critical Literature Review

The literature review is structured in two sections. The first section focuses on an introduction to the luxury retail environment, types of luxury brand retailers and the definition of a brand, a luxury brand and brand experience. The literature review also highlights what constitutes brand experience and how it manifests itself in the luxury retail environment.

The second section investigates the definition of curation and the role of the curator. Acknowledging that the role of the curator has its origins in cultural institutions, in order to gain an understanding of the term "curation", the role of the curator was first examined in the cultural environment.

2.1. Introduction to the Luxury Retail Environment

2.1.1. Luxury Retail Market Background

The luxury goods market is small in terms of the number of organisations trading, but significant from an economic perspective (Kapferer, 2015). Deloitte (2014) state that the worlds top 10 largest luxury goods companies contributed to sales of $94 billion. In addition, the world's top 75 largest luxury goods companies generated luxury good sales of $171.8 billion in 2012, resulting in an average company size of $2.3 billion. With regards to the categorisation of the luxury goods market, Bain & Company (2014) estimated the value of the luxury business as Euro 800 billion, with Euro 319 billion spent on cars, Euro 138 billion spent on hotels and Euro 217 billion spent on personal luxury items, for example, clothing, watches, jewellery, fragrances and leather goods.

Fionda and Moore (2009) claim that since the beginning of 2000, the global luxury goods market has demonstrated an impressive growth rate, and despite economic turbulence, the luxury goods market has continued to show positive growth and significantly outpaced that of other consumer goods categories. Much of this economic growth has been driven to date by an increase in expenditure in the BRIC countries, access to capital and rise of stock market listed companies in the sector (Bonetti, 2014)[9]. Kapferer (2015) proposes that luxury growth is related to a country's gross domestic product (GDP) growth and consequently, can be attributed to the increased wealth levels in Asia, with the subsequent rise in demand for international luxury brands, and also, the broadening of the luxury product offer from

[9] The acronym "BRIC" refers to Brazil, Russia, India and China, countries deemed to be a similar stage of newly advanced economic development

predominantly fashion and accessories, into home and other lifestyle areas, such as furniture and home accessories, books, music, food and art (Fionda and Moore, 2009).

However, despite a weakened economy in 2012-2013, the demand for luxury goods remains vibrant Deloitte (2014). Similarly, Bain & Company (2014) claims the luxury market is acclimatising to sustainable, long-term growth due to a stronger US luxury market, an increase in global touristic spending and global online retailing. Bain & Company (2014) also propose that due to the extent of the cross-pollination of luxury spending, it is necessary to consider consumers and global brand propositions and experiences, rather than geographies.

Brynjolfsson et al (2013) claim that geography is becoming a non-issue as technology is making omni-channel retailing inevitable and therefore will reduce the ability of geography and ignorance to shield retailers from competition. The authors claim that in light of the advances in mobile device technology, the retail industry is evolving towards a seamless omnichannel retailing experience (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013: p. 2). Rigby (2011) states that advances in digital retail technology represent an industry disruption, where retailers who do not adapt, will die. Online retailing now represents the fastest growing retail sector and due to mobile and digital technologies becoming more sophisticated, it is resulting in the blurring and integration of online and physical stores and the growth of omnichannel shopping (e.g. Bell et al, 2015; Fulgoni, 2014; Winter, 2012; Brynjolfsson et al, 2013; Rigby, 2011; Lomas, 2013).[10] Fulgoni (2014) states that technology advances relating to mobile devices has resulted in a huge increase in price comparison and product information searches before purchasing, creating a significant blurring of the path to purchase.[11] Fulgoni (2014: p. 379) states that this is "truly is the day and age of the mobile omni-channel shopper and buyer" as customers utilise their mobile devices for instant sources of inspiration, product search, price comparison and consumption, unless they go to a physical store to try before buying and to have a more personal and multi-sensory experience.

Rigby (2011) states that customers want everything; from an online shopping experience: a limitless selection, rich product information, personalised and editorial reviews, price transparency, fast and convenient transaction, and from a physical shopping experience: highly personal, face-to-face service, the ability to touch and feel products, a curated collection, instant gratification of consumption and most importantly, to shop as an event and an experience. Winter (2012) claims that the impact on the luxury retailer is that it must structure its operations accordingly to gain the associated benefits of online retailing, for example, the ability to offer a much broader and deeper product selection, genuine global

[10] Lomas (2013) refers to the fastest growing retail sector in the US according to Forrester Research: http://techcrunch.com/2013/03/13/forrester-2012-2017-ecommerce-forecast/.

[11] comScore Conference (2014) states that 222 million customers visiting retailer sites, 98m visiting comparison sites, 91m visiting coupon sites and 229 million using search engines to find products and price comparisons

market reach, efficient inventory pooling and lower inventory costs. In addition, if the luxury retailer also possesses physical stores, more complex set of paths-to-purchase now exist, which means that they need to be seamless. The implication for the luxury retailer is to re-invent the brand experience by tapping into both the physical advantages of the physical store and online capabilities and proposition (Winter, 2012).

Brynjolfsson et al (2013: p. 2) state that the new brand experience needs to incorporate the rich, sensory, personal and instant gratification experience in stores with also the online proposition as a "showroom without walls", concierge model, which is geared towards transparency, support and convenience for customers. Brynjolfsson et al (2013) also propose that one of the ways to achieve success in this evolving and highly competitive retail environment is the development of differentiated, curated content. Fulgoni (2014) concurs and states that as the digital world evolves, retailers will need to design and develop seamless brand experiences and paths-to-purchase across the online and physical stores that are customer-centric. Bain & Company (2014) also state that not only will consumers be at the heart of the customer experience, they will be the centre of luxury itself, a critical part of the ideation, creation and sales of luxury.

The literature regarding both online luxury retailing and luxury omnichannel retailing is acknowledged to be limited and at an early stage (Liu et al, 2013). Kapferer and Bastien (2012) argue that luxury brands should communicate online but limit sales online to only "entry products" as digital is the antithesis of luxury in multiple ways and corrodes key elements associated with luxury e.g. exclusivity and personalised service. However, given the seamless ways in which people wish to shop (e.g. Rigby, 2011), it is becoming increasingly important for luxury retailers to deliver a holistic omnichannel brand experience.

2.1.2. Types of Luxury Retailers

Since the late 1990s, the luxury market has transformed from "a constellation of small, artisan, family-owned businesses into a consolidated economic sector" (Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015). Nobbs et al (2012) propose that the luxury retail sector differs from mass market retailing as it is based on exclusivity, premium pricing and a prestigious retail environment. With regards to the type of retailers, Nobbs et al (2012: p.920) claim that within the luxury sector most luxury retailers design, manufacture and sell the luxury goods themselves under a sole brand, suggesting that this "means what they sell and how they sell it is inextricably linked". However, in their description of different luxury brand retailers, Chevalier and Gutsatz (2012) include retailers that do not design and manufacture luxury products themselves but are based on a wholesale model and sell a selection of multiple luxury brands, such as luxury department stores, specialist luxury stores and online luxury

retailers. Ailawadi and Keller (2004) suggest that unlike a sole product brand, the sum and characteristics of the multiple brands carried influences the brand image and equity of this type of retailer. In addition, that the 'multi brand' retailer does not rely on the provenance of the sole brand to define its image and identity, but attaches "unique associations to the quality of the service, their product assortment and merchandising" (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004: p. 332). Drawing on these descriptions of luxury retailers, this thesis acknowledges the differences between the two and examines luxury brands and brand experience through the lens of a "sole brand" luxury retailer and "multi brand" luxury retailer.

2.1.2.1. Sole Brand Luxury Retailers (SBLRs)

Over the past twenty years, individual luxury brands, with their focus being primarily fashion, have developed into luxury retailers through product extension (Moore and Doyle, 2010). Moore and Doyle (2010) claim that the luxury brand has emerged as a pre-eminent strategic communications device to signal the values, positioning and identity of the retailer and its products. The authors state that a key commonality amongst the sole luxury brand retailers is that they have all assumed brand creation, development and distribution roles.

Nobbs et al (2012) propose that retailing within the luxury sector may be characterised differently from other forms of retailing due to three reasons. Firstly, SBLRs may sell and manufacture their products themselves. Therefore, the brand personifies not only the identity of the work, but also the quality of manufacture and production (Moore et al, 2010). This refers to those luxury brands whose provenance is associated with traditional, haute-couture design houses that manufacture their own distinct brands and have typically merged into luxury conglomerates, for example Louis Vuitton, part of LVMH, the world's largest luxury conglomerate (Bonetti, 2014).

Secondly, luxury brands operate branded luxury retail stores on a considerable global scale. Internationalisation is linked to the ability of the SBLR to reach domestic saturation at an early stage, which infringes upon the perceived exclusivity of the luxury brand, and therefore, the route for growth is through market expansion (Moore, Fernie and Burt, 2000).

Thirdly, SBLRs tend to operate in global markets directly, establishing large luxury lifestyle flagship stores rather than solely franchising or wholesaling, suggesting the importance of carefully managed and controlled distribution to retain perceptions of the exclusivity and integrity of the luxury branded goods (Moore and Doherty, 2007). Physical presence in the market facilitates a far higher degree of control, including, for example, the selection and distribution of exclusive or one-off products in-store only, having the ability, freedom and space to create product and service experiences, recruit staff who are natural brand ambassadors and build strong relationships with local media and press (Brun et al, 2008).

However, the role of the flagship store is observed to be more than just a first market entry move but also a physical representation of the brand (e.g. Brun and Castelli, 2008; Bonetti, 2014). It provides direct access for consumers and creates the "stage" of the brand experience, which is important in light of consumers' growing need for authenticity and excitement, and the growth of online and the need to provide a compelling in-store experience (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013). The aesthetic appeal of the store is important in light of rising competition and the need to reinforce authenticity and differentiation (e.g. Manlow and Nobbs, 2012; Kapferer, 2015). The flagship enables the luxury brand to self-promote, engage emotionally through the aesthetic environment and create experiences that transform into relationships (Manlow and Nobbs, 2012). Many dimensions of a flagship store have been observed in the literature, including the store being located in a large building in a prestigious area; the building offering a high quality and multi-sensory environment; the grand scale architecture mimicking museum architecture by using the same architects e.g. Koolhas for Prada, Gehry for LVMH; the store offering the most extensive product range and also communicating the brand position, identity and values (e.g. Kozinets et al, 2002; Moore and Doherty, 2007; Manlow and Nobbs, 2012; Joy et al, 2014).

It is proposed that becoming a luxury retailer for these sole luxury brands is important for several reasons (e.g. Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). Firstly, it anchors the luxury brand as a broader luxury lifestyle retailer brand with the opportunity to develop and offer a greater number of lifestyle-orientated product categories that enhance the aspirational lifestyle of the consumer (e.g. Chevalier and Mazzolovo, 2008; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). With the luxury brand itself already rich in symbolic meaning and fulfilling emotional and self-identity needs, the development of new categories is simply the next stage in growth from a range of products to a holistic, luxury lifestyle proposition (Chevalier and Mazzolovo, 2008). Secondly, the physical presence of the retail store allows consumers to enjoy a multi-sensory brand experience, which is important in terms of the increasingly competitive omnichannel market and the need to create a differentiated physical brand experience that complements the online brand experience (Brynjolksson et al, 2013). Kapferer and Bastien (2012) state that the physical store underpins the "dream value" of the brand and whilst luxury brands should communicate digitally, it should limit its online sales to entry products only so as not to diminish the exclusivity and dream value of the luxury brand which can only be found in the store, physically. In addition, the store provide opportunities for the customer to touch and co-create the physical brand experience, for example, through events and entertainment in "third spaces" (Nobbs et al, 2012: p. 926) which add significant value to ensuring long-term consumer advocacy (e.g. Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Prahalad and Ramaswarmy, 2004).

2.1.2.2. Multi Brand Luxury Retailers (MBLRs)

It is acknowledged in the literature what whilst many of the SBLR branding principles apply to MBLRs; they have largely been neglected in the literature and differ in application (e.g. Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Burt and Davies, 2010). Burt and Davies (2010) state that the view of a retailer brand being a wider concept than a sole product brand, and one that possesses different characteristics, is an emerging view.[12] Ailawadi and Keller (2004) state there are three key differences to SBLRs. Firstly, MBLRs are more multi-sensory, rely on rich consumer experiences and create their brand position differently by attaching unique associations and narratives to the service, brand and product assortment and merchandising. Secondly, the image and equity of the MBLR brand, and the store, depends on the equity of the luxury brands that they sell in store as the edited collection. The selection and edit of the luxury brands stocked and sold is critical as the luxury brands are ingredients and act as informational clues about the retailer brand (Monroe and Krishnan, 1985). Baker et al (1994) states that the merchandise quality of the brands carried directly influences customer brand perception. Porter and Claycomb (1997) concur and argue that the most favourable perceptions refer to when the luxury retailer carries both an anchor brand and a large number of credible and desirable brands. Burt and Davies (2010: p. 868) also iterate this point by stating that through the selection or edit of the range of luxury brands that the retailer brand sells "allows consumers to identify preferences and reduce consumer costs. Therefore, the retail brand name and the retail context within which it is sold, presumably enables such identification and recognition, and reflects a level of trust which encourages repeat purchases". Thirdly, MBLRs may sell their own private label product line alongside the luxury brands it sells, enabling the MBLR to differentiate from other competing MBLRs (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Ailawadi and Keller (2004) argue that combined, these factors support the development of strong and unique retail brand associations in the minds of the consumers, customer loyalty and enhanced retail brand equity.

The MBLR also differs from the sole brand luxury flagship store model when compared with the characteristics of a luxury flagship store presented by Manlow and Nobbs (2012). Firstly, whilst the MBLR store is similar to a SBLR, in terms of being a high quality, multi-sensory store environment that sells exclusive and luxury goods, which serves to communicate the brand position and values, it is not necessarily, located in a large outlet, nor does it necessarily offer the widest and most in-depth product assortment, as this may be done online. Chevalier and Gutsatz (2012) state that the MBLR store may be observed to be the physical marketing channel which may support the online business, as opposed to representing an iconic, destination "brand cathedral" that is a flagship of one brand (Fionda and Moore, 2009). This suggests that the MBLR store may serve in a different capacity to the flagship store, in that it represents the physical showroom for customers or a venue for brand

[12] Burt and Davies (2010) state that this was first discussed in the Journal of Retailing in 2004.

experiences, rather than be the biggest stockroom, which for them may now be online (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013). The literature also highlights that both greater uniqueness of products and an organised and asymmetric product assortment have a stronger positive effect on consumers and sales, than the offer of higher quantities of product assortment (e.g. Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Kahn and Wansink, 2004; Boatwright and Nunes, 2001).

A further difference is that the MBLR does not need to protect the exclusivity of one brand, but wishes to promote its differentiated selection or edit of luxury brands and can embrace implement an omnichannel retailing strategy (Brynjolfsson et al, 2013), therefore differing from Kapferer and Bastien's (2012) claim that luxury brands sold online should be limited. Whilst acknowledging that "an internet strategy is indispensable for a luxury brand", Kapferer and Bastien (2012: p. 247) state that "digital is in strong contradiction with luxury on most aspects". The authors claim that digital is about immediacy, availability, accessibility, price, (which is more aligned with a fashion business model), all of which is opposite to luxury, which is about timelessness, rarity, effort and beyond price (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

In the McKinsey "Digital Luxury Experience" Report (2013) it is stated that digital is already influencing 20% of total luxury sales. The report highlights three different types of luxury retailer digital archetypes, two of which refer to the sole luxury brand retailer: "the hesitant holdout" (smaller sole luxury brand retailer, use of online as showroom only) and "the selective e-tailer" (the majority of sole luxury brand retailers, tight retail control, marketing channel, entry-level products only sold online, as advocated by Kapferer and Bastien (2012)). The third type relates to "the plugged in pro" who pursue a diversified, omnichannel retail strategy, consisting of MBLRs and only a limited number of SBLRs.

In summary, it is observed that both types of luxury retailer share the objective of delivering a multi-sensory brand experience (Berthon et al, 2009) and also one that may enable the customer to enact an aspirational self-identity driven by personal consumption motivations (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Truong, 2010; Silverstein and Fiske, 2008; Amatulli and Guido, 2012). A shared objective of delivering a highly positive experience to develop close relationships with customers is also observed in the literature (e.g. Morrison and Crane, 2007; Atwal and Williams, 2009; Brakus et al, 2000; Arnould and Price, 1993; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008). However, the nature in which the two types of luxury retailers create the brand experience may differ, with regards to strategy of establishing flagships around the world versus the combination of one, or a small number, of luxury physical stores as showrooms or experiential venues in conjunction with a global online strategy. Nonetheless, it is observed that a common objective is to design and develop a seamless brand experience that delights their consumers and enhances brand equity (e.g. Kim, 2012; Hamiede, 2011).

2.2. An Examination of 'Brand', 'Luxury Brand' and 'Brand Experience'

2.2.1. Definition of a 'Brand'

A first step in being able to understand brand experience is being able to define what a "brand" is. The definition of a brand has been greatly researched (e.g. Aaker, 1994; Aaker, 1997; Alexander, 2009; Kapferer, 2008; Simoes and Dibb, 2001; Holt, 2002; Schmitt, 1999; Keller, 2003; de Chernatony et al, 2010). A basic function is to convey information to consumers: a product quality level (Erdem and Swait, 1998), reasons to buy an organisation's product (Park, Jaworski and MacInnis, 1986), expertise of an organization (Aaker and Keller, 1990) and a social identity (Belk, 1988). Organisations invest in communicating this information coherently as consumers rely on brands as cues for understanding and meaning (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

Human personality refers to the current prevailing school of thought in the area of psychology, which is the personality trait structure (Louis and Lombart 2010). The linkage of trait theory to branding is due to the definition of a trait as an inclination to adopt consistent modes of cognition, affect and behaviour (Costa et al, 1991). This theory of animism implies that human personality traits provide meaning to human actions and experiences (Louis and Lombart 2010). Aaker (1997) developed the "Big Five" human personality structure based on a symbolic set of human characteristics as consumers imbue brands with human personality traits. However, Aaker's (1997) theory of brand personality has been criticized for assuming too broad a definition of the traits (Azoulay and Kapferer, 2003), yet there is yet to surface a common adoption (Louis and Lombart 2010). Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) argue that there is a need to adopt a stricter definition of brand personality in order to facilitate an accurate measure of the concept. Keller (2003) concurs that integrating the intangible aspects of branding (emotion or affect) and brand knowledge (cognitive) is important as it could improve the ability of researchers to model consumer responses. Recognition that cognition and affect could occur at the same time has been acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Peter and Olson, 1999, Keller 2003, Van Osselaer and Alba 2000). However, Da Silva and Alwi (2006) suggest that by combining two methodological approaches of brand image evaluation – cognition and emotion/affect may enhance understanding of consumer perception of a brand and consumption patterns. There is agreement with this proposition in the literature (e.g. de Chernatony 2002, Keller 2003, Argawal and Malhotra, 2005).

Antonides and van Raaij (1998) claim that the brand can be defined by the consumer's objective reality (previous knowledge or experience), which may be influenced by constructed reality (the communicated brand strategy) and secondly, by experiences of others, all of which together create a subjective reality of the brand by the consumer. Holt (2004) also argues that it is the constructed reality or rather the "myth" of the brand that resolves acute

tensions people feel between their own lives by tapping into desired needs and aspirations. Louis and Lombart (2010) also comment that a brand can create a positive subjective reality for customers and propose that brands influence evaluation, purchasing behaviour and consumption. Positive perceptions of the brand are formed if the brand actively engages with the consumer and take his or her interests into account (Louis and Lombart 2010).

However, Louis and Lombart (2010) suggest that whilst it is not possible for the luxury retailer to directly control the consumer's objective reality, the constructed reality can be, to a greater degree. In light of the widespread range of possible brand touch-points, luxury retailers must ensure that all elements of brand identity are consistent and congruent with the lifestyle that is desirable to the consumer and enables self-expression (e.g. Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Dion and Arnould, 2011). The brand experience includes all elements that form the existence of the brand and therefore it is critical that they are congruent both internally and externally at all times (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008).

The literature, therefore, suggests that brands are more than a visual identity, they are a psychological construct held in the minds of all those aware of the brand and used by consumers to express and validate their own self-identity (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Berger and Heath, 2007; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Kylander and Stone, 2012). This conceptualisation of a brand is based on the psychological need of consumers for self-expression and affirmation of self-identity and through the linkage of human personality traits to that of a brand, the brand is a physical and symbolic means of communication (Chernev et al, 2011).

In light of this definition of a brand in the literature, attention is now focused on understanding the differences, if any, between this meaning and the meaning of a "luxury brand" as the next step of reviewing a "brand experience".

2.2.2. Definition of a 'Luxury Brand'

It is worth noting that despite the size of the market, Reyneke et al (2011: p. 259) argue that the branding literature exhibits "surprisingly little attention has been given in the marketing literature to luxury brands". Joy et al (2014) states that the paucity of the literature is regrettable. Whilst Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2015: p. 82) argue that luxury is "as old as humanity", they state that "the idea of luxury brands as a special form of branding and a cultural force behind fashion and an affluent consumption lifestyle, is a relatively new concept."

The literature has acknowledged that defining luxury brands is difficult as it is a relative and subjective concept (e.g. Tynan et al, 2009; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004 and Dubois and Duquesne, 1993). Miller and Mills (2012: p. 42) claim that luxury brand theory "resembles a patchwork of definitions" due to the existence of competing definitions and a "lack of clear parameters that delineate brand luxury from other similar terms (for example, status and prestige) which create confusion". Ehbauer and Gresel (2013) claim that the lack of an explicit definition is due to the term "luxury" being a sociological phenomenon related to the political, economic and moralistic influences of society, which has led to definitions in the literature being based on object and behaviour-oriented perspectives (Lasslop, 2005). Several attempts have been made to create frameworks for the different perspectives, often referring to luxury consumption motivations of customers (e.g. Miller and Mills, 2012; Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Truong, 2010; Amatulli and Guido, 2011).

In the literature three key perspectives exist regarding the definition of a luxury brand: a firm-centric or management view, a consumer or consumption view and more recently, an integrated view of both consumer and management perspectives. Traditionally, a definition of a luxury brand has stemmed from a firm-centric or managerial perspective, focusing on power (e.g. expertise, auratic, prestige), features (e.g. artisan, craftsmanship, heritage, timelessness, no obsolesce) and control (e.g. pricing, distribution, communications) (e.g. Roper et al, 2011; Tynan et al, 2010; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Keller, 2009). Chevalier and Gutsatz (2012: p. 6) highlight the managerial perspective and emphasis of the luxury brand asserting its own definition by noting a quotation by the former chairman of Hermes: "A luxury brand must respect three conditions: it should stamp beautiful objects; it should select its customers and promote them as individual promotion agents; it should be able to decide freely and without any constraints what it wants to do."

The luxury brand's ability to dominate and influence customers is noted by Cervellon and Coudriet (2013) who claim that luxury brands possess three types of power that influence a customer and their interpretation and definition of a luxury brand: expertise and coercive power (as manifested in luxury brand sales employees), secondly, the prestige power of the store, for example, an imposing luxury brand flagship as noted by Moore et al (2008) and Doyle et al (2008), and thirdly, auratic power, derived from the linkage of art to luxury (Dion and Arnould, 2011). Dubois et al (2005) also recognise that the meaning of a luxury brand stems from a managers who employ the term to represent a form of classification between bottom and top tier products. The emphasis on classification as a definition is supported by Keller (2009) and Nueno and Quelch (1998) who state that a luxury brand sits in the most prestigious position amongst all brands, as well as Interbrand (2008), classifying it as a tier of a product category that demonstrates price insensitivity: the ratio of functionality to price is low, while the ratio of intangible and situational utility is high. The importance of defining a luxury brand as the highest in a product classification may also be observed to relate to

Nobbs et al (2012) claim observed in Chapter 2.1.2, that the quality of the products designed and sold are inextricably linked to the brand itself.

In contrast to the management definition, the consumption view refers to consumer perceptions of the definition of a luxury brand (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004). Drawing on the work of Kapferer (1998) and Dubois et al (2001), Vigneron and Johnson (2004) present a luxury brand framework and highlight six key identifiers of a luxury brand, including three non-personal consumer perception dimensions, conspicuousness, uniqueness and quality, and two personal consumer perspections, hedonic value and extended self. However, as Roper et al (2011: p. 376) claim consumer perceptions of luxury are changing as "structural and cultural shifts in capitalist markets have engendered a democratisation of luxury, making accessible to all a conventionally exclusive category". In an era referred to as mass prestige or "masstige", where luxury is available to the masses, customers may consequently find it challenging to provide a consistent definition of a luxury brand or even the essence of luxury (Roper et al, 2011: p.376, Silverstein and Fiske, 2008: p. 5). Kapferer (2015) concurs and states that in pursuit of new market growth, the increase of new luxury brand product extensions and sub-brands has led to a higher level of accessibility of luxury to the general population and, therefore, the nature of consumer perception of the definition of luxury is polysemic.

Building on the consumer perspective, Roper et al (2011) adopt an integrated perspective of the definition of a luxury brand. Roper et al (2011) acknowledge that the definition depends upon the eye of the beholder and, therefore, is one that can no longer be defined in solely economic terms as advocated by the management perspective. Roper et al (2011) claim that the definition of a luxury brand is a socially constructed concept, generated by consumer communities. Consequently, Roper et al (2011: p. 376) states that: "whilst managerial approaches may discern some stable set of core luxury traits, at least from the consumer's viewpoint, the notion of a luxury brand is not without tensions and contradictions".

Tynan et al (2010) also support an integrated perspective as they recognise that the definition of a luxury brand is not restricted to a managerial perspective, but must take into account the consumer's perspective of luxury brands and consumption. Tynan et al (2010: p.1157) claim that "luxury goods exist at one end of a continuum with ordinary goods, so where the ordinary ends and luxury starts is a matter of degree as judged by consumers." Berry (1994) also states that the definition of a luxury brand relates to the context in which luxury is based and therefore may evolve and change over time.

This view is also supported by Kapferer and Bastien (2009), who also claim that the definition of a luxury brand is connected to the consumer and describe luxury brands as those that are perceived by the consumer as multi-sensory and symbolise a set of intangible and tangible

benefits on both a psychological and emotional level, rather than a just a functional perspective. More recently, Amatulli and Guido (2011) also concur that definition of a luxury brand relates to the customer, but that it is based on the customers internalised and externalised motivations for luxury consumption. Tynan et al (2010) also claim that the definition of luxury brands relates to personalised experiences and a set of intangible and tangible benefits to customers, however, they argue that they are based on an interactive process between the customer and the luxury retailer, which results in co-created experiences, and adapted Smith and Colgate's (2007) theoretical framework for luxury brands:[13]

[13] Areas of addition include "craftsmanship", "value of the relationship to the luxury brand and the brand community" "self-gift giving behaviours", "nostalgia", "internally focused aspects of uniqueness" and "authenticity" to the and finally, "exclusivity" and "rarity"

Table 2.1: Tynan et al (2010) Customer Value Framework for Luxury Brands

Luxury Brand - Types of Value for Customers		Theoretical Sources
Utilitarian		Holbrook (1999) Excellence Kapferer (1997) Craftsmanship
Symbolic/Expressive	Outer-Directed	Conspicuous Consumption (Veblen, 1899) Bandwagon, Snob and Veblen Effects (Leibenstein, 1950; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) Perfectionism Effect (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) Signs (Levy, 1957; Kapferer, 1997) Status/Esteem (Holbrook, 1999; O'Cass and McEwen, 2004) Prestige (Dubois and Czellar, 2002) Social Identity (Vickers and Renand, 2003) Uniqueness (Ruvio, 2008; Kapferer, 1997) Authenticity (Beverland, 2006)
	Self-Directed	Bandwagon Effect (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) Personal Identity (Vickers and Renand, 2003) Aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999) Self-gift Giving (Mick and DeMoss, 1990; Tsai, 2005) Uniqueness (Ruvio, 2008) Nostalgia (Holbrook and Schindler, 2003) Authenticity (Beverland, 2006)
Experiential/Hedonic		Hedonic Effect (Hirschman and Holbrook, 1982; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) Aesthetics (Holbrook, 1999) The Experience (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Cabrorne and Haeckel, 1994; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 2003; Poulsson and Kale, 2004; Prahalad and Ramaswarmy, 2004; Caru and Cova, 2003)
Relational		Consumer-Brand Relationships (Fournier, 1998; Gronroos, 2006; Veloutsou and Mourinho, 2009) Brand Community (Kozinets, 2002; Cova and Cova, 2001; Mniz and O'Guinn, 2000)
Cost/Sacrifice		Perfectionism Effect (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999) Exclusivity (Catry, 2003) Rarity (Catry, 2003)

Presenting an integrated perspective, Tynan et al (2010) state the identifiers of a luxury brand are high quality, expensive and non-essential products that appear to be rare, exclusive and authentic and offer high levels of symbolic and emotional/hedonic values through co-created customer experiences.

Roper et al (2011) propose that this integrated perspective extends the managerial perspective of the definition of luxury brands to that of the consumer and also recognises that consumers are an inherent part of co-creation of luxury brands. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004), Schembri (2006) and O'Reilly (2005) also support the socially constructed definition of

luxury brands and state that consumers play an important role in providing meaning and value.

However, despite developing a more inclusive definition of a luxury brand by integrating the consumer and management perspectives, the findings of the empirical research undertaken by Tynan et al (2010) are questionable in light of the nature of the study.[14] Yet in light of the focus of this research, it is important to identify the distinguishing characteristics of the consumer and management perspectives, with regards to how luxury retailers define and develop their luxury brands and brand experiences. Table 2.2 provides an example of the differences between the management-centric and customer-centric definitions of luxury brands. It is suggested that depending on which definition the luxury retailer ascribes to regarding the definition of luxury brands, it may influence the nature of the design of brand experience.

Table 2.2: Observed Differences Between Management and Customer-Centric Definitions of Luxury Brands

Observed Differences Between Management and Customer-Centric Definition of Luxury Brands in the Literature	
Example of Management-Centric Definitions of a Luxury Brand	**Example of Customer-Centric Definitions of a Luxury Brand**
Possesses three forms of power: expertise, prestige and auratic Cervellon and Coudriet (2013) Brands are auratic (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011)	Depends on the nature of how the customer consumes within the market segment itself (Chadha and Husband, 2006)
Focus on high quality, heritage of craftsmanship, recognizable design, limited production to ensure exclusivity and maintain demand, global reputation, strong association with a country that shares positive associations of a characteristic e.g. France and style, imbued with personality and values of the designer or creator (Nueno and Quelch, 1998)	Determined by customer's internal and external motivations for consumption (Amatulli and Guido, 2011)
Controlled luxury image, creation of many intangible and aspirational brand associations, tightly controlled distribution, high pricing with strong quality clues (Keller, 2009)	Interpretations based on an interactive process between retailer and customer that results in co-created experiences (e.g. Tynan et al, 2010; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004)
Based on prestige and depend on highly controlled brand diffusion to enhance exclusivity (Phau and Prendergast, 2000)	Perceived conspicuousness, uniqueness, quality, hedonism and perceived extended-self by customers (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004)

2.2.3. Definition and Characteristics of Brand Experience

Despite growing interest in the luxury brand experience, Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2015: p.91) argue that with few exceptions "luxury brand experiences have not been clearly

[14] The authors themselves recognize the limitations of their empirical research and that the findings may not be generalisable to all luxury brands.

defined". In the literature, brand experience in a consumer context is defined by the multiple touch-points a consumer may have through a variety of sensory channels (e.g. Kim et al, 2007; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Atwal and Williams, 2009; Brakus et al, 2009; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2010). The literature has generated a number of frameworks concerning the different brand experience dimensions. Schmitt (1999) proposes that brand experience consists of five brand experience dimensions relating to emotional, affective and behavioural dimensions that enable retailers to deliver the desired experience. Brakus et al (2000) argue that each experience is subjective and consists of internal responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) as well as behavioural responses evoked by brand-experience related stimuli. Fulberg (2003) concurs but also highlights that brand experience can be determined by the individual characteristics of the location, product and media it chooses to communicate through. Berry et al (2006) state that although Schmitt's (1999) brand experience dimensions are acceptable, they argue that it is the creation and management of three types of clues, which include the five dimensions in various forms that enable the retailer to achieve the desired brand experience and closeness to the customer. Franzen and Moriarity (2009) acknowledge Berry et al's (2006) set of three types of clues, but differ in their classification by defining brand experience as possessing three key dimensions: mental, relational and behavioural dimensions.

More recently in the literature it is observed that key to brand experience is the presence of strong emotional connections between the brand and the consumer (e.g. Atwal and Williams, 2009; de Chernatony et al, 2010; Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012). Consumers no longer just buy products and services, but instead buy emotional experiences around what is being sold (Ratneshwar and Mick, 2005). With a variety of new experiences being offered to them, consumers' expectations are rising and now would not only like to be entertained and stimulated, but also emotionally affected (Schmitt, 1999).

Arnould and Price (1993) state that an emotional brand experience is one where customers experience high levels of emotional intensity and which is long-term in nature. Pine and Gilmore (1998) argue that an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as a stage and goods as props to engage customers in a way that creates a memorable event. Building on this, Lindstrom (2005a) states that in order to achieve high emotional intensity it is important to engage all five senses when developing an experience. Sullivan and Heitmeyer (2008) also define brand experiences as those that engage the consumer on the level of multiple senses and emotions; forging a lasting, intimate emotional connection that transcends material satisfaction. However, Morrison and Crane (2007) propose that a brand experience goes further than just offering emotional benefits relating to a brand, but

rather a set of independent emotional benefits, by creating and managing a highly synchronised end-to-end brand experience.

In light of the affective, cognitive and emotional dimensions of brand experience and the requirement for retailers to design and deliver experiences that are multi-sensory in nature, attention is now focused on how luxury retailers draw on these dimensions to design and develop a luxury brand experience.

2.2.4. Design and Development of Experience

The design of an experience as a means of influencing consumer behavior is acknowledged in the literature as being hugely influential (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Kotler, 1974; Moore and Lochhead, 1998; Baker et al, 2002; Lin, 2004; Joy et al, 2014, Pine and Gilmore, 1999). It is observed that in order to achieve an integrated brand experience, all elements must fit and support the brand (Schulz, 1997), which depends on the retailer investing in the integration of image, identity, working practices and communications (Kitchen and Proctor, 2015). Moore and Lochhead (1998) acknowledge three areas of research in the literature regarding the design of a retail store and experience, as firstly, the elements of store image (Kunkel and Berry, 1968); secondly, the interrelationships that exist between the store image and brand identity (Mazursky and Jacoby,1986), and thirdly, the effect of the store identity upon consumer purchase behaviour, customer loyalty and competitive advantage (Zimmer and Golden, 1988).

Kotler (1974) states that it is “atmospherics”, defined as sensory and emotional mechanisms that influence consumers’ behaviour. Atmospherics refer to how design elements of space are manipulated as a projection of the brand identity to create specific responses (e.g. Kotler, 1974; Ballantine et al, 2010; Bitner, 1992; Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Kapferer (2015) claims that atmospherics are the most influential in hedonic-type of shopping environments when customers are subconsciously motivated by a series of integrated tangible and intangible clues. The design of the sets of clues and overall experience are referred to in the literature as manipulation of multi-sensory variables such as architecture, music, colour, aroma, physical layout and lighting, which in turn influences consumer attitudes and behaviour (e.g. Manlow and Nobbs, 2012; Joy et al, 2014; Ballantine et al, 2010; Lin, 2004). The design of a store is a manifestation of the brand position and identity, resulting in what is described as a “Brandscape” (Riewoldt, 2002).

However, Rayburn and Voss (2013) argue that in the literature brand experience research to date has been based on studies that looks at discrete experience clues or dimensions only, which is not how the customer experiences things and calls for a more holistic perspective. Foster and McLelland (2015) concur with Rayburn and Voss (2013) but also state that

retailers do not actively differentiate their retail environment from competitors, due to them considering the atmospheric elements individually, like a checklist, and not holistically in the way that a customer experiences it. The authors argue that this severely limits both the retailer's ability to immerse consumers in a brand experience and also the ability to create a unique physical in-store environment required to differentiate. Foster and McLelland (2015) propose that a themed luxury retailer is one that uses a concrete interpretation of a brand message, through merchandise assortment and atmospheric elements, to dictate the design of the environment and experience. It is stated in the literature that the design of a holistic brand concept or themed retail environment can create a differentiated and immersive experience and lead to positive outcomes such as customer enjoyment and loyalty, as well as a route to future growth (e.g. Rayburn and Voss, 2013; Foster and McLelland, 2015; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Atwal and Williams, 2009; Kozinets et al, 2002; Sherry, 1998).

Theoretical frameworks regarding the design of experience in the literature tend to focus more on the characterisation of customer responses to the retail environment, rather than an examination of the processes and roles responsible for the design and development of an experience. For example, there are various environmental psychology models such as "Stimulus-Organism-Response", Baker et al (1992) "Ambient, Design and Social" model, Bitner's (1992) "Servicescape" model and Rosenbaum and Massiah's (2011) "Experiencescape". However, these models focus on environmental dimensions and stimuli regarding how customers respond on cognitive, emotional and physiological levels only. They also imply they are controllable by organisations to either enhance or constrain employee and customer approach/avoidance decisions and to facilitate or hinder employee/customer social interaction (Parish et al, 2008). However, there is little mention of the processes and roles in the organisation that support the design of the different types of stimuli. Most importantly, in the literature there is little regarding the link to the roles and brand objectives regarding the design and development of a holistic brand experience, suggesting a gap in the literature and an opportunity for further research.

2.2.5. Brand Experience in the Luxury Retail Environment

Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2015) claim that in some of the most recent studies regarding conceptualisation of luxury brands, the literature has begun to identify the importance of experiences specifically related to the luxury retail environment. The authors refer to Atwal and Williams' (2009) development of a typology of consumer experiences associated with luxury brands, Tynan et al's (2010) proposition that luxury brand experiences enhance the value of luxury brands and Gistri et al's (2009) claim that hedonic nature of luxury brands enables consumers to enjoy a level of sensory gratification that is otherwise unobtainable from non-luxury brands. However, Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2015) argue that in the literature, luxury brand experiences have not been fully defined and there is considerable

scope for further research. In light of the acknowledged limited research, the literature review now examines luxury brand experiences.

2.2.5.1. Brand Experience In Store

Within the luxury store environment, it is claimed that an emotionally-focused brand experience may be defined as a concept built around the idea of partnerships (Holt, 2004). This concept relates to consumers being offered the opportunity to interact with a product that will provide them the ability to form ideas, thoughts and emotions about it in the confines of a warm and welcoming, low-risk environment (Fulberg, 2003). In his comparison of axioms across four branding models, Holt (2004) argues that emotional/experiential branding is the most appropriate strategy for retailers. His argument is founded on the requirement for retailers to deliver on two dimensions: firstly, for employees to interact and build strong relationships with customers and develop deep interpersonal connections and secondly, for the brand to develop a compelling ideology that creates rituals and heritage with consumers. Morrison and Crane (2007) concur that relationships are important but highlight the importance of fully utilising all tools at the retailer's disposal to deliver the desired brand experience. They argue that within the store environment there are two distinct features that determine the brand experience, the physical and relational vision and realisation of the brand experience.

With regards to the physical vision and realisation of the brand experience, Morrison and Crane (2007) claim that it relates to all physical elements of the brand including the design of the entrance, windows, displays, interior design and fixtures and fittings. It also relates to the products and brands that the luxury retailer buys and sells. Connection between the physical vision and realization occurs on two levels. The first level refers to the link between the physical vision and the internally-generated symbolic needs of the customer, which relates social meaning. Naylor et al (2008) concur and state that the entire retail space, environment and the selection of products that a luxury retailer sells conveys social meaning and brings to life the desired type of lifestyle for the consumer. Lindstrom (2005b) suggests that this not just about the physical product, but the situation where it is used and emotional associations that are struck. The second level refers to the ability of the luxury retailer to understand the lifestyle activities of a consumer and ensure that it is able to easily meet any externally generated functional needs relating to solving a consumption-related requirement (Soloman, 1983). In the literature, several experience design models are noted, attempting to outline the necessary steps to achieve these externally-generated functional needs and create the optimal customer experience, both in store and online (e.g. Smith et al, 1999; Constantinides, 2004).

With reference to the relational vision and realisation of the brand experience, this relates to the clues that communicate to the customer the type of luxury retailer it is, which stem from employees and the other customers also shopping in the store (Morrison and Crane, 2007). Morrison and Crane (2007) claim that the relational context of brand experience is significantly more influential in generating positive customer relationships and, therefore, brand experiences.

Service and customer relationship building in the retail industry has been identified in the literature as an undisputed means to differentiate vis-à-vis the competition (e.g. Berry et al, 2006; Merrilees et al, 2007; Heskett et al, 1997). The concept of service quality plays a highly significant role in supporting and growing the brand as it influences long-term customer loyalty and impacts retail brand equity (Haelsig et al, 2007). Thus, people in customer-facing roles must possess the right set of values, competences and knowledge that supports and enhances the brand experience (e.g. Shao et al, 2004; Schneider and Bowen, 1995). Kapferer and Bastien (2012) argue that in luxury retailing, apart from the creative director, the most important people for the brand experience are the salespeople who are in direct contact with the customer.[15] Kapferer (2015) states that the selection of staff and investment into staff training regarding delivery of a consistent, high quality brand experience is critical as brand experience is about people who design, develop and deliver it. It is suggested that a key requirement for the luxury retailer is, therefore, not only to achieve an excellent fit between staff recruited and the customer base it is targeting, but also ensure staff stability in order to delivering customer experiences consistently (Morrison and Crane, 2007). Kapferer and Bastien (2012) claim that stability is key as luxury customers must feel that they are part of a club and it is important that the same staff are there to provide the consistency, develop relationships and therefore, reinforce belonging.

A further element identified in the literature regarding the relational context of brand experience and the generation of clues and meaning for customer refers to storytelling (Lundqvist et al, 2013). Kapferer (2015: p.91) claims that "we live in storytelling societies" which enable customers to identify and associate themselves with what is being communicated. It is claimed in the literature, that representatives or ambassadors of the brand, e.g. customer-facing staff or 'mythotypes' (Olson, 1999), celebrities that symbolise the positive attributes that the brand wishes to project or be associated with, are a means to bring the brand alive, communicate brand values and promote services in store through storytelling of brand narratives (e.g. Fog et al, 2005; Kozinets et al, 2010; Mossberg and Nissen Johansen, 2006; Kozinets et al (2002). Lundqvist et al (2013: p. 284) propose that "well-told stories regarding a brand appear to have the potential to influence consumers' brand

[15] The authors use the example of Louis Vuitton who functions according to an "inverted pyramid", which describes how the whole organisation has been designed to serve the store, in order to serve the customer.

experience" as stories and narratives not only help customers understand and make meaning effectively, they also enable the customer to describe the brand in stronger, positive terms and are even willing to pay more. However, whilst the literature does recognise the potential of storytelling to facilitate interpretation (Escalas, 2004b), provide meaning to brand experiences and act as a framework for brand communications (Shankar et al, 2001), it is limited and has been "scarcely discussed in the brand management literature" (Lundqvist et al (2013: p. 292). This limitation also suggests that there is a gap in the literature regarding how customer-facing roles or other types of roles that are employed by the two different types of luxury brand retailer may influence and create brand experiences through storytelling.

In summary, whilst the literature identifies that luxury retailers can manipulate the physical vision through the atmospherics, aesthetics, product mix and merchandising to deliver a brand experience, it is acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Morrison and Crane, 2007; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Haelsig et al, 2007) that it still plays a smaller role than the relational context in influencing the overall brand experience. Storytelling was also identified as a means of bringing the brand alive and influencing brand experience, yet it was observed that the literature is limited (Lundqvist et al, 2013) regarding the nature of the roles and the ways in which luxury brand retailers orchestrate this. However, it is identified that key to the relational context and the role of the employees to deliver the brand experience, however, is the ability of the organisation to embed the brand values and bring them to life throughout the organisation (Aaker, 1994).

One of the differentiating factors for luxury retailers refers to the values that the retailer brand stands for (Morrison and Crane, 2007). The brand values are a form of "way finding" codes for the customers to evaluate if the luxury retailer is able to support or enhance the customer's existing or aspirational lifestyle (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012). The implication for the luxury retailer is how to design experiences that communicate the brand values on an emotional level, which are congruent with and champion those of the customer (e.g. Holt, 2004; de Chernatony et al, 2010).

Steenburg and Spears (2011) claim that the experiences consumers seek and values they hold tend to vary according to the economic situation they are in. The authors suggest that consumers regulate their exposure to different experiences in an effort to maintain a preferred optimum stimulation level. A key consideration is not only the external environment and how it affects the target customer and his or her values, but also to create emotional experiences that communicate the brand values and meet the consumers' optimum stimulation level expectations (Steenburg and Spears, 2011). The literature identifies types of stimulation and emotions that the retailer may attempt to evoke and link with the brand values, including desire with the provision of instant gratification and hedonist consumption (e.g. Campbell,1987; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999); curiosity with the provision of something

always new and interesting in store (Lent and Tour, 2009); social gratification with the provision of "snob" consumption, and feeling highly valued with the provision of highly personal and respectful customer service (e.g. Galbraith, 1984; Silverstein and Fiske, 2008).

Chevalier and Gutsatz (2012) concur that customer emotions may arise at different times but the objective for the luxury retailer is to ensure that a customer-experience focused approach is developed, ensuring every sensory touch-point is aligned with the brand values. A further school of thought regarding the nature of emotion or stimulation a customer may experience is Pine and Gilmore's (1998) Four Realms of Experience. Unlike Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw (2011) who argue that a customer experiences one emotional state discretely at any one time, Pine and Gilmore (1998) claim that there is a "sweet spot", with the richest experience being when the brand (and brand values) are brought to life and a consumer is able to participate across all four elements of the brand experience. Morgan et al (2009) argue that whilst Pine and Gilmore's (1998) framework emphasizes performance and the steps an organization needs to take to deliver the optimal performance, Pine and Gilmore (1998) have drawn on the insights of Schechner's (1988) Performance Theory and that services are observed as dramatic encounters between actors and audiences in a setting. Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) argue that there is a requirement for more strategic thinking regarding customer experiences as it is too Disney-like, company-centric and treats the customers as human props in a carefully staged performance, when customers also have an active co-creation role in the development of brand experience (Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014). Atwal and Williams (2009), utilising dimensions of intensity and consumer involvement of experience, argue that there are four zones of luxury brand experience that luxury retailers can strategically deliver and implement in order to reinforce the brand identity and values; including entertainment, educational, aesthetic and escapist. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver (2015) claim, however, that despite the study providing some insights, it was not based on empirical findings and the validity is questionable. In addition, it is noted that once again, there is little mention of the processes and roles that are required to design and deliver these experiences.

In summary, it would appear that despite the literature (e.g. Atwal and Williams, 2009; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011, Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014) providing insights into how consumers perceive and co-create brand experiences, they have been extracted from areas that are not solely focusing on brand experience in the luxury context, nor validated by empirical findings, as in the case as Atwal and Williams (2009). However, common themes for brand experience have been identified, namely the concept of partnerships, co-creation of experience between the luxury retailer and the consumer, the importance of physical and relational clue consistency between the brand values and brand experience and the acknowledgement of different consumer emotional needs throughout the brand experience.

In light of the literature reviewed, this thesis argues that a more holistic perspective of the dynamics between the brand experience, the luxury retailer and the consumer is required. Specifically, the specific processes required and role responsible for designing and developing the luxury brand experience.

2.2.5.2. Brand Experience Beyond the Store – Online and Social Media

It is acknowledged that research regarding online luxury retail remains at a rudimentary stage (e.g. Moore and Doyle, 2010; Liu et al, 2013). Nonetheless, the internet has fundamentally transformed the industry practices of retailing and distribution management (e.g. Liu et al, 2013; Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2006; Pentina et al, 2011). Online shopping is now estimated to be the fastest growing area of internet usage globally (Forsythe and Shi, 2003). It is widely recognised that advances in mobile technology provide luxury retailers with the potential to transform their brand experiences through omnichannel retailing (e.g. Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2010; Evanschitzky et al, 2004; Brynjolfsson et al, 2013).

Okonkwo (2009) claims that the luxury sector has been slow to embrace the digital transformation because of its concern of losing the aura of exclusivity and lack of control on distribution. Kapferer and Bastien (2012) concur and suggest that whilst luxury retailers must have an online presence, it should be restricted to entry products in order to alleviate any reduction in perceived exclusivity. However, many concerns in luxury retail have largely dissipated in view of the fact that the internet is now widely perceived to be a significant element in a retailer's armoury (Boschma and Weltevreden, 2008).

As a result of the internet, retailers tend to enjoy increased 'footfall', improved customer relationships and enhanced promotional exposure (Doherty and Ellis-Chadwick, 2008). Weltvrenden and Boschma (2008) claim that the retailers that have developed the most sophisticated websites and online brand experiences enjoy the greatest comparative advantage. It is argued in the literature that a well-aligned omnichannel strategy enhances the performance of retailers (Wolk and Skiera, 2009). Tse (2007) also states that in combination, the strength of the bricks and mortar strategy allows retailers to leverage their existing physical assets and brand experiences in store, whilst also enabling customers to enjoy the personal and sensual pleasures of going shopping with a considerably increased product range online. Liu et al (2013) identified that consumers want experiences in store that entertain in a highly sensory ambience with professional luxury retailer staff who not only provide expertise, but also provide consumers with a sense of power and a feeling of being successful just by shopping in the prestigious store. This suggests that in both luxury retail shopping environments, the luxury retailer must be able to create and deliver two distinct, yet integrated brand experiences that meets the specific needs in each environment.

In light of the literature reviewed above, it would seem that that there are a number of key implications for luxury retailers. Firstly, that with more information and choice online, the concept of an "edit", or a selection of products that have been selected specifically for the target market that represent the values, identity and the differentiated proposition of the luxury brand, is important. Secondly, also of importance is the ability of the luxury retailer to consistently deliver on brand experience promises regarding delivery on time, in order to ensure the value of convenience of online is maintained (Fulgoni, 2014). Finally, the ability to create and maintain a seamless on and offline brand experience is critical, with the role of the store adapting to play an integrated role with the online brand experience, utilizing physical space in a way that enables customers to enjoy immersive and differentiated sensory brand experiences when they come in-store (Brynjolksson et al, 2013).

Holt (2004) argues that one of the fundamental concepts of brand experience in a retail setting is one of partnership whereby experience is co-created between lifestyle retailer and consumer. This suggests that in light of the reviewed literature, an implication for the luxury retailer for consistency of experience, to replicate and create partnership-based experiential communication and events outside of the store.

The opportunity to develop partnership or co-creation relationships with customers outside of the store setting can be organized around areas of the target consumer's lifestyle through interactive social media (Schlinke and Crain, 2013). Schlinke and Crain (2013) argue that not only is social media able to provide accessible ways for customers and brands to interact on multiple levels as part of the omni-channel retail strategy, but also co-create online communities to deliver consistent brand communications and interact with customers across the appropriate channels:

Table 2.3: Schlinke and Crain (2013) Communication Venues

Key Communication Venues		
Venue	**Orientation**	**Communication Type**
Facebook	Social	Casual
LinkedIn	Business	Professional
Twitter	Content Focused	Professional – Casual
Blogs	Content and Opinion	Informational

Whilst the above classification helps to identify appropriate online channels, it falls short as it fails to include social networks such as any consumer-initiated communication on the web (Harridge-March and Quinton, 2009). Virtual communities and social networks provide the connections to allow consumers to form strong relationships that not only influence consumer behavior through "word of mouse" referrals, but also brand associations held by other consumers (Glance et al, 2005). Szmigin et al (2005) suggest that the social networked

society offers extended opportunities for retailers to develop deeper and more meaningful relationships with customers.

In summary, the literature highlights agreement that maintaining an active engagement with the customer through online interactions remains a critical issue for brand experience design and is not just an augmented experience but is integrated into a seamless omnichannel experience (e.g. Bart et al, 2005; Bridges and Florsheim, 2008; Christodoulides, 2009, Kollman and Suckow, 2008; Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2013)

This concludes the first section of the literature review and attention is now turned towards curation in the second section of the literature review.

2.3. The Role of the Curator and Definition of Curation

The second section of the literature review examines the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment. In order to do so, the first step is a review of the meaning of curation from where the term first derived, the cultural environment, in order to gain an understanding of how and why the term "curation" is used in the retail environment. The second step is to review the meaning of the term curation in the context of the luxury retail environment.

2.3.1. A Review of Cultural Institutions and Exhibitions

The cultural institution is defined for the purpose of this thesis as a museum or cultural centre, which provides the opportunity for the general public to visit a permanent collection or exhibition for the purpose of education. The museum or cultural centre may be either for-profit or non-profit and can also be managed privately or by the government, or a mixture of both. According to the International Council of Museums, museums can be described as:

"A non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment (ICOM, 2007).

Dubin (2011: p. 479) claims that "museums are a primary way that society represents itself to its own members, and the larger world", contain authentic art and objects and endow the content of an exhibition with tangibility and weight. Rodner and Preece (2015) concur and state that museums are repositories of cultural meaning and symbolic capital, which as educational and cultural institutions legitimise and bestow the highest kind of institutional

approval of objects or works of art by owning or presenting them. In contrast to museums, Dubin (2011) describes exhibitions as solidifying culture, science, history, identity and worldviews and have shifted from being object-driven to ideas-driven.

2.3.1.1. Permanent Collections and Temporary Idea-Led Exhibitions

Exhibitions in cultural institutions consist of a number of different formats, ranging from permanent collection exhibitions that are core exhibitions of a museum that have a long-term lifecycle and form an anchor physically and intellectually; 2-dimensional art exhibitions, 3-dimensional artefact exhibitions, intercreative exhibitions, temporary exhibitions and idea exhibitions (e.g. Maximea, 2014; Molineux, 2014). In addition, more recently, Lord and Piacente (2014) claim that the definition of exhibitions is evolving as they can now also be virtual, non-traditional migratory and temporary pop-up spaces, which combined with social media, offer new opportunities for interaction, participation and experience. All formats aim to facilitate interpretation and meaning during the visitor experience, however the curation, transmission of the meaning and experience differ by format (Maximea, 2014).

For example, permanent collections and art exhibitions are curated to mediate interpretations and meanings of the art and are situated in museums often built in the classical tradition of architecture for display, ceremony and for contemplation (Lord, 2014). The buildings are very spacious, often with extremely high ceilings and, whilst may they may use different finishes, are based on a "golden mean", in which the dimensions of a space in ratio to the art are based on a mathematical proportion (Maximea, 2014). Due to the emphasis on the aesthetic, curatorial focus is on the objects themselves and there is often limited contextual content or narrative to interpret the work of art as it has communicative power in itself (Molineux, 2014). This type of space is also the one that the brand literature refers to regarding the imitation of museum architecture by SBLR flagship stores (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Nobbs et al, 2012). In addition, the lack of contextual information is also similar in a sole luxury brand retail environment as the power of the luxury brand itself is sufficiently symbolic to communicate meaning (e.g. Vigneron and Johnson, 1999; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

In contrast, 3-dimensional artefact, intercreative, temporary and idea-led exhibitions communicate meaning through context, for example, concepts, narratives and stories, offering a more multi-sensory and mediating type of visitor experience (Lord and Piacentre, 2014). Molineux (2014) claims that temporary idea-led exhibitions possess a number of key characteristics: that they are organised around an exploration of a concept or an idea, are not defined by any one discipline, incorporate different objects and perspectives, focus on the visitor experience, may be dialectical and aim to provoke dialogue (even action and advocacy) and mediate meaning, and provide a forum for co-creation of experiences. This

type of exhibition has been identified in the literature as the main mechanism of engaging in popular ideas, trends and topics, staying fresh in appeal, designing and developing narrated content and turning it into interactive and participative visitor experiences (e.g. Dernie, 2006; Psarra, 2005; Molineux, 2014). Consequently, the growth of temporary idea-led exhibitions has led to a greater curatorial emphasis on thematic research to generate a powerful and meaningful idea (Nicks and Piacente, 2014) and the design and development of an immersive visitor experience (Lord, 2007). Molineux (2014: p.135) concurs and claims that as visitors "demand an ever more sophisticated and curated thought provoking and interactive experience, it will be interesting to see how ideas exhibitions proliferate and evolve".

Wineman and Peponis (2010) state that a temporary idea or theme-led exhibition may be defined as a multi-dimensional, interpreted space that creates a narrative through movement in time and in space. Maximea (2014) concurs that temporary exhibitions are multi-dimensional spaces and that due to their limited lifecycles require flexibility to rapidly adapt in terms of the complexity of content and aesthetics. Kaniari (2014: p. 450) comments that the interdisciplinary nature of an ideas-led exhibition requires curatorial skill that is something akin to a 'magician's act', building a visual architecture in the form of "an invisible thread which runs through them (the objects) all as a consistent theme". Lee (2007) claims that in light of the pace of change and diversity of the ideas and subject matter curated, temporary exhibitions are the result of work undertaken by a multi-disciplinary team of professionals who draw on different traditions, conventions and interdisciplinary sources of knowledge to select, link and juxtaposition diverse artefacts and create experiences.

In light of the brand literature, it is suggested that temporary ideas-led exhibition characteristics are similar to those identified in the MBLR store environment in four key ways. The first similarity refers to a temporal perspective, for example, the regular pace of change driven by the seasonal cycle of retail. The second similarity refers to a content perspective, for example, the selection and linkage of unique multiple items or luxury brands across different categories that are arranged and assorted asymmetrically or with juxtapositions to highlight and bring to life a concept. The third similarity relates to the focus on the delivery of multi-sensory, immersive experiences by attaching associations and narratives to a unique assortment of items or goods (Ailawadi and Keller, 2004). Finally, the fourth similarity refers to an organisational requirement, with regards to the requirement for multiple functional teams to select, edit and organise brands and create immersive experiences (e.g. Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Tynan et al, 2010).

2.3.1.2. Design and Development of Experiences

Acknowledging that the focus on education and learning is a priority, it is also recognised in the literature that cultural institutions are evolving and focusing more on the design and development of experiences in response to new customer or visitor requirements:

"Consumers are no longer satisfied with just pleasant scenery, or a fun outing. Consumers want hedonic encounters to be incredible from a purely hedonic standpoint, yes, but now, these consumers also want to learn, to be exposed to new cultures, new information, broaden their horizons and gain new insight from their experience" (Joseph-Mathews et al 2009, p. 197).

In the literature, it is acknowledged that cultural institutions are increasingly observing their purpose and mission in light of the visitor experience they offer (e.g. Kirchberg and Trondle, 2012; Falk and Sheppard, 2006). Lampugnani (2011) states that exhibitions are mediums through which culture and art are experienced instead of previously being presented. There has also been an increased focus in the literature regarding how visitor experience is being designed and developed and is shifting away from static displays and collections in isolation to co-created transformative experiences (e.g. Roppola, 2014; Dernie, 2006; Lord, 2014; Arnold, 2009). Prior (2006: p. 515) claims that some museums even operate "according to a logic of showbusiness" in order to accommodate audiences who are increasingly accustomed to, and expect, a level of spectacular.

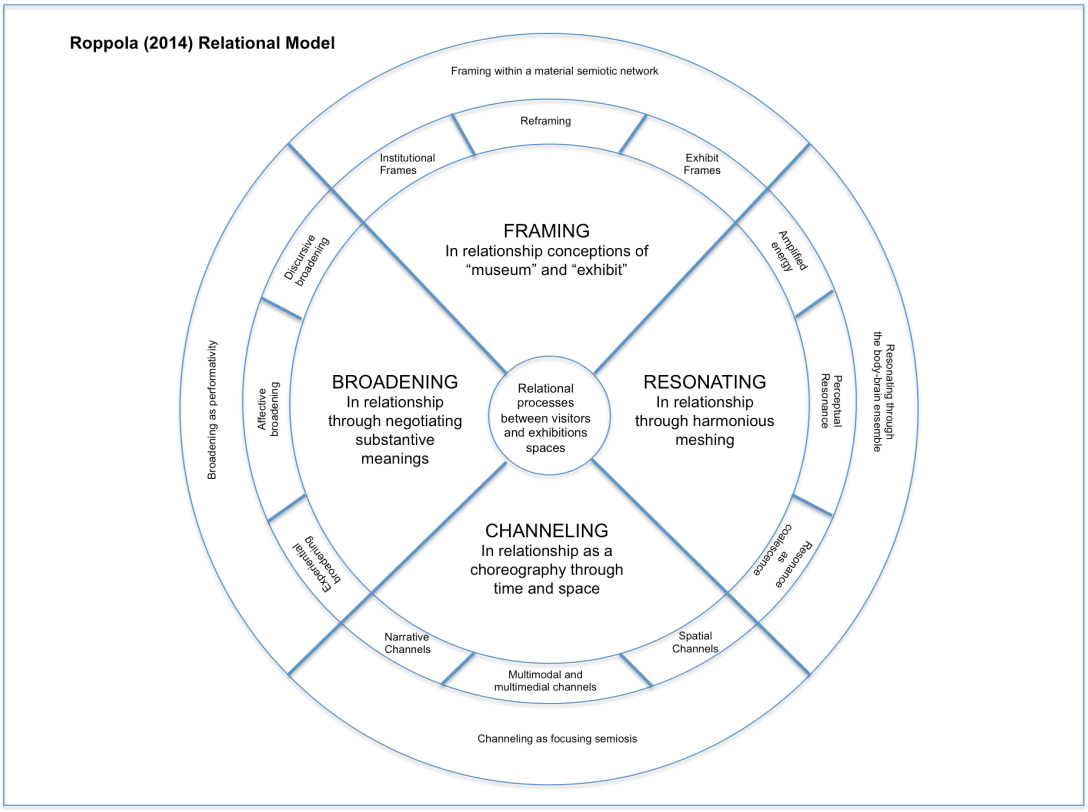
Design and development of visitor experiences in the context of an exhibition is identified as possessing two different elements – the emotive; which focuses on utilizing displays for the purpose of aesthetics and experience immersion, and the didactic; which focuses on educating and facilitating interpretation (Belcher, 1991). However, Dernie (2006) states that there is no longer a clear divide between the two elements and three types of exhibition exist: narrative spaces which focus on storytelling; performative, which focus on visitor interaction rather than just passive observation, and simulated experiences, which refer to immersive multi-media based scenes and experiences. Dernie (2006) claims that this marks an evolutionary step away from curation in traditional museum exhibitions, which were based on object-focused, unmediated display. More recently, Nicks and Piacente (2014) concur and claim that the strongest exhibitions experience now start with a powerful and meaningful core idea or concept that shapes the design of experiences. Lord (2014) is in agreement that the practice of communicating with visitors and the design of exhibition is changing. Lord (2014) claims that five different modes of experience exist according to the type of exhibition, including contemplation, comprehension, discovery, interaction and participation, as summarised in Table 2.4:

Table 2.4: Summary of Lord's (2014) Five Modes of Visitor Experience

Mode of Visitor Experience	Example of Type of Exhibition	Experience Focus
Contemplation	Art, Aesthetic Display of objects to be appreciated in themselves Permanent Collections	Relatively passive though intellect and emotions engaged Transformative experience consists in the enhanced appreciation of the meaning and quality of the object or art
Comprehension	Natural History, Science Contextual, Thematic Exhibitions Artefacts or items grouped and curated together, not studied individually but in relation to each other	Visitors are actively engaged as well as being contemplative Transformative experience is the discovery of meaning
Discovery	Natural History Interdisciplinary Exhibitions Open visual access to artefacts	Highly visual and intellectually active The curator's task is to facilitate and mediate the understanding of the meaning not to predetermine what the meaning is
Interaction	Science, Children Thematic Exhibitions Multi-sensory, hands-on access to objects with narratives	Most kinesthetically involving mode of visitor experience Transformative experience is the discovery of meaning that affects visitor values, interests and attitudes Staff are highly trained to facilitate simulated experiences to enable learning
Participation	Interdisciplinary Multi-sensory Ideas-led / Thematic Exhibitions Exhibits are fully open and accessible to enable participation and co-creation	Involves the visitor in the creation and curation of the exhibition itself Enact scenarios, participate in opportunities to identify and selection connections and provide answers for others to respond to

Roppola (2014) is in agreement that the exhibition environment is evolving and that it has been recognised as more than a backdrop and instead an important consideration contributing to the overall experience. Roppola (2014) also concurs that there are new modes of visitor experience, but proposes that there are four key relational processes between visitors and the organisations that relate to the creation of all types of experiences. As outlined in Figure 2.1 below, the four processes refer to Framing (providing context and making sense of what is being presented through the development of a "Frame" which then influences the core idea or concept of the experience), Resonating (igniting a spark and a relationship to draw in visitors), Channeling (mediating meaning and understanding through poetics and politics of physical display) and Broadening (enabling people to broaden their selves and explore new boundaries through co-creation of experiences):

Figure 2.1: Roppola's (2014) Relational Model



The evolving interest and focus on designing and developing different and immersive experiences for exhibitions in the cultural environment appears to share similarities with the brand literature regarding experiences in the luxury retail environment. Building on the similarities between luxury retailers and exhibition types observed in Chapter 2.3.1.1 and the luxury brand experience themes highlighted in Chapter 2.2.6, Table 2.5 outlines further examples of observed similar themes concerned with the design and development of experiences:

Table 2.5: Observed Similarities in the Museology and Brand Literature Regarding the Design and Development of Experiences

Observed Similar Themes	Exhibitions	Luxury Retailers
Focus on the communication of meaning and creation of experience	Exhibitions are where meanings are communicated and experiences are created (Lord, 2014)	Luxury brand retail stores communicate meanings and experiences (e.g. Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Atwal and Williams, 2008; Tynan et al, 2010; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Joy et al, 2014)
Shift away from static object display to being part of the experience	Display objects are no longer being just presented but being used as part of a transformative experience in exhibitions (e.g. Roppola, 2014, Dernie, 2006)	Emphasis on interactive, multi-sensory experiences (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Atwal and Williams, 2004)
A core idea, concept or theme can create a differentiated and powerful experience	The most powerful and meaningful exhibition and experience is designed around a 'core idea' or concept (Nicks and Piacente, 2014) The Frame informs the core idea or concept and design of the experience (Roppola, 2014)	The design of a holistic brand concept or themed retailed environment can create a differentiated and immersive experience and lead to positive outcomes such as customer enjoyment and loyalty (Rayburn and Voss, 2013; Foster and McLelland, 2015).
Experience must be holistic	People are embedded in a network of relations which is simultaneously human and material, therefore all elements of an experience plays a part and forms an overall holistic experience (Roppola, 2014)	All elements of the brand experience must fit together to deliver a holistic brand experience (e.g. Kitchen et al, 2007; Schultz, 1997b; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Ailawadi and Keller, 2004) Retailers tend to design experiences by checklist which impedes their ability to deliver a differentiated, holistic brand experience. Design and development of a luxury brand experience must be holistic to be differentiated (Foster and McLelland, 2015)
Different modes of transformative experience exist	Five different modes exist according to the type of exhibition (Lord, 2014) Different modes of experience exist as they are created and influenced by the relational processes between the exhibition and the visitor (Roppola, 2014)	4 states of the "Experience economy" (Pine and Gilmore, 1999) Typology of four zones or types of consumer experiences with luxury brands (Atwal and Williams, 2009)
Design influences the experience and nature of emotional connection	Two key elements influence the experience: the Emotive (aesthetics) and Didactic (education and facilitation of interpretation) (Belcher, 1991) Design has shifted from object-focused, unmediated display to exhibition design that blurs narrative spaces, performative spaces and simulated experiences (Dernie, 2006) All four relational processes impact the design of exhibition experiences (Roppola, 2014)	Atmospherics and design influence the nature of the experience and nature of emotional connection (e.g. Kotler, 1974; Bitner, 1992; Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Kapferer, 2015; Manlow and Nobbs, 2012; Nobbs et al, 2012; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Riewoldt, 2002)
The design of experiences is relational and co-created with visitors/customers	Relational Model (Roppola, 2014) The success of an exhibition is whether it has achieved an affective experience, inducing a new attitude, interest or learned something new which is dependent on the visitor's confidence in the perceived authenticity of the content and participate in and therefore, co-create the experience (Lord, 2014) The nature of design of co-creation of experiences according to exhibition type (Molineux; 2014)	Brand experience is based on partnerships (e.g. Holt, 2004; Fulberg, 2003), relational vision (Morrison and Crane, 2007) Brand experiences are co-created with customers (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Atwal and Williams, 2009)

Table 2.5 highlights that by looking through the lens of experience design in the cultural environment, it is possible to identify areas that may help to interpret the findings of this research and also observe where the gaps and new opportunities for learning may reside regarding experience design and the role of curation across the two different types of luxury retailer. For example, in light of Seo and Buchanan-Oliver's (2015) statement that luxury brand experiences have not been clearly defined, and also recognition in the literature that

luxury brands have traditionally been defined by a managerial-centric perspective, despite recognition that experiences may be co-created with customers (e.g. Roper et al, 2011; Tynan et al, 201; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015; Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Atwal and Williams, 2009), the application of museology literature e.g. Roppola's (2014) Relational Model may serve as a useful perspective in understanding the processes and roles that are required to design and develop brand experience, and how the role of curation may play a part. In addition, the observation that SBLRs may share a number of similarities with permanent collection exhibitions and MBLRs with temporary, ideas-led exhibitions suggests that the nature and type of curation and curatorial roles may differ regarding the design and development of a luxury brand experience.

With this in mind, attention is turned towards a review of the role of the curator, its objectives and how it influences and shapes the design and development of experiences.

2.3.2. Role of the Curator in the Cultural Institution Context

It is noted in the literature that "a contemporary definition of a curator is more broad-ranging than ever before" (George, 2015: p. 2). Consequently, a number of different perspectives were observed in the museology literature regarding the role of the curator in the cultural environment. Five key perspectives were identified, as summarised below in Table 2.6, and are reviewed as a first step towards understanding if there are any related associations of the meaning of curation in the cultural context with the term 'curation' used in the luxury retail environment.

Table 2.6: Identified Perspectives Regarding the Definition of the Role of the Curator in the Cultural Institution Context

Different Perspectives Regarding the Definition of the Role of the Curator	Literature
Perspective 1: The Role is Undefined	Clavir (2002) Undefined due to it being dependent on the cultural environment it is set Obrist (2013) Undefined due to it a considerable increase and proliferation in curatorial activities and also changes in cultural professional roles
Perspective 2: Traditional Practices of Curation Exist	Horie (1986) Same role as it was in the 19th and 20th centuries: collecting, preservation and research, key influence on the collection or exhibition Ames (1992) Agent of the appreciation of the quality and meaning of objects and interpretation of heritage
Perspective 3: The Curator's Role is Evolving Simultaneously as Museums Evolve	Hooper-Greenhill (2011) The traditional power broker role has dissipated in light of the new wave of specialists who have curatorial responsibilities to deliver educational experiences Lord (2014) The curator role may still focus on collecting, preserving and research but the growing dominance of exhibitions has led to a proliferation of new roles that also play a part in curation of an exhibition and experience Behnke (2010) Traditional power of the curator has diluted as the context of the museum changes from being solely focused on art history to multi-media commercial centres Boylan (2011) Some museums may still be dominated by the scholar curator role but have transformed their organizational structures with an increase in management type roles Prior (2011) Museums are changing and curators can no longer present the fruits of their connoisseurship to a passive audience
Perspective 4: The Role of the Curator as a Mediator	O'Neill (2012) Curators have moved from being caretakers to mediators of meaning Kreps (2011) No longer focused on care-taking but cultivating and mediating relationships Rosoff (1998) Facilitator of world views and mediate meaningful participation of all visitors McDonald (2011) Mediating relations between people and objects Clifford (1997) Facilitator of developing platforms where different cultures interact Edmonds et al (2009) Facilitates the encounter between the artwork and the audience Freitas (2011) Responsibility towards the artwork, audience and mediation of the dynamic between the two to facilitate new learning and interpretation Mitnick and Ryan (2015) Curators mediate the making of meaning for visitors
Perspective 5: The Role of the Curator to Design and Deliver an Experience	Simon (2010) Develop and execute a fully participative experience Roppola (2014) Design the opportunity for co-created experiences for visitors through four key constructs Arnold (2009) Visual thinkers and choreographers of exhibition experiences that enable visitors to become active participants in their own experiences, collaborating in how the spaces are negotiated and meaning is extracted Bonney et al (2009) Produce a learning experience through 3 types of participation: contribution, collaboration and co-creation

Regarding the first perspective, Clavir (2002) states that the role remains undefined as it depends on the cultural environment in which the museum is set. More recently, Obrist (2013) concurs that the curator's true raison d'etre remains largely undefined, but for a different reason. He observes that despite the dramatic increase in exhibitions and proliferation of

courses in curatorial studies today, there is a lack of definition of the role and the boundaries of the role remain fluid (Obrist, 2013).

The second, more traditional perspective observed in the literature is contradicts the first, in that the role is clearly defined as the traditional practices and activities of the 18th/19th century curator prevail in Western cultural institutions, e.g. researching, classification, curation of a collection, preservation, interpretation and education. Horie (1986) states that the primary role of the curator is scholarly, with scientific investigation and education in its widest sense, and the conservation of objects. It is, however, noted that this perspective is now nearly 30 years old and relates to permanent collection exhibitions. Ames (1992) also states that the role of the curator is an authority and expert that contributes to intellectual theory and knowledge. Ames (1992) claims that the role of the curator is the necessary agent not only for the care and maintenance of, but also the education and interpretation of heritage.

The third perspective is that the role of the curator is evolving simultaneously with the evolution of museums. Hooper-Greenhill (2011) states that the role of the curator has developed in line with the development of cultural institutions. The 20th century saw the emergence of the nation-state museum with curatorial authority, scholarship and professional judgment as the drivers of the museum. Hooper-Greenhill (2011) states, however, in the 21st century, the role of the curator has, and continues to, adapt to other specialists who come from diverse backgrounds such as educators, marketers, retailers, planners and outreach officers who need to be united in their aim to serve their audiences through making the museum experience relevant, educational and inspirational. Lord (2014) concurs with the growth of specialists, many of which have curatorial responsibilities to some degree, which suggests that this perspective relates to, and supports, Obrist's (2013) claim why the role remains undefined. Hooper-Greenhill (2011) also claims that the emergence of new and diverse roles in the museum signifies that the role of the curator as a power broker to disempowered visitors is changing as the museum shifts towards a multi-specialist organisation that focuses on delivering educational experiences.

Behnke (2010) also identifies the dilution of the traditional power of the curator as the context of the museum changes and states that as museums are losing their monopoly on presenting art, based on the canon of art history, curators are becoming curator-entrepreneurs in order to support the museum generate new sources of revenue and transforming into multimedia commercial centres. Boylan (2011) also claims that whilst the role is evolving, some museums remain dominated by the "scholar-curator' model, but most museums have transformed their organisational structures with the result of having fewer curators and an increase in management-type roles. Prior (2011) also confirms this shift away from the traditional scholar-curator role, but states that this is due to the fact that it can no longer just present the fruits of their connoisseurship to a passive audience, but rather must embrace

opportunities to enable audience interpretation beyond the linear narratives of traditional history.

The fourth, and most extensively written about perspective in the literature, refers to the role of the curator moving away from presenting linear narratives and shifting more towards that of a mediator (e.g. O'Neill, 2012; Kreps, 2011; Rosoff, 1998; MacDonald, 2011; Clifford, 1997). Edmonds et al (2009) states that the role of the contemporary curator has evolved beyond its origins as a keeper and carer of objects and is moving towards a more dynamic and proactive position as a facilitator of experiences and a mediator between artists, artworks and audiences. Freitas (2011) is in agreement with Edmonds et al (2009) and claims that curation is moving away from its historic, institutional origin of scholarly preservation to one identified as exhibition production and design and differentiated from activities normally associated with permanent collections and museums. Freitas (2011) states that the role of the curator is as a mediator to play an insightful role in relation to the group dynamic, be it artefacts, people or objects, in the production of meaning and opening new knowledge horizons and opportunities for responding and interpreting. O'Neill (2012) concurs that the role of the curator has moved from a caretaker of a collection, a behind-the-scenes arbiter and organizer of taste to one that reveals the way art or culture has been displayed, mediated and discussed and that there is sufficient evidence today to consider curatorship as a distinct practice of mediation. Mitnick and Ryan (2015) concur, stating that the role of the curator is to mediate interactions between people and information and help people perceive new meanings and interpret the experiences. However, they also note that curatorial mediation regarding the making of meaning has received scant attention to date, which may be attributed to the existing confusion regarding the role.

Finally, the fifth perspective is that the role of the curator is to design and deliver a participative experience. Arnold (2009) states that the role of the curator is as a visual thinker and choreographer of experiences that enable visitors to fully participate and co-create their own meanings and experiences. Bonney et al (2009) claims there are three types of participation that the curator needs to engage with: contribution, collaboration and co-creation. Simon (2010) concurs with Bonney et al (2009) and states that to be successful in a socially networked world, the role of the curator must develop and execute a fully participative experience. Simon (2010) claims that experiences should not be curated at a distance for a crowd, but proposes a five-stage model of "I to We" to support the museum's ability to connect people and the content on display. However, despite drawing parallels of how the "I to We" model can create genuine participative experiences using the global brand, Nike, as an example, Simon (2010) does not examine the processes of designing an experience in detail. Roppola (2014), however, as outlined in Chapter 2.3.1.2, provides a comprehensive view of four different process constructs that contribute to the design and development of a holistic experience.

To conclude, these different perspectives highlight the role of the curator as a complex one and one that cannot be easily defined due to its dependence on context (e.g. Clavir, 2002) and the proliferation of new forms of curatorial activities (Obrist, 2013). In addition, the role has changed over the past 25 years in light of the evolving nature of the museums and new forms of exhibition developing, as outlined in Chapter 2.3.1.1, influencing the relating different modes of visitor experiences (Lord, 2014) and curatorial processes (Roppola, 2014). The traditional concept of the museum as an authoritative treasure house that passively presents predetermined interpretations has been replaced by a stronger mediator role, a site of leisure, entertainment and an opportunity for individual growth and development (Freitas, 2011). Museums and cultural centres are also moving towards a more commercial model and are focusing on how they can serve the visitor and curate a memorable experience (e.g. Arnold, 2009; Roppola, 2014; Simon, 2010). In light of these developments, the traditional definition of the curator, historically the sole owner of specialist knowledge of permanent collections, is broadening in meaning in the context of new forms of exhibition. In light of cultural centres shifting towards more open and collaborative entities, the role of the curator appears to be one that is becoming a cultural mediator, mediating meaning between objects and people through the development of core ideas or concepts that support the design of co-created experiences and is supported by specialist teams (e.g. Arnold, 2009; Mitnick and Ryan, 2015; Roppola, 2014). The degree of mediation and co-creation of experience focused on, designed and developed by the curator, is however, influenced by the heritage, brand position and differentiation strategy of the museum or cultural centre itself. For example, the highly participative experiences curated at the Cooper-Hewitt Design Museum in New York, the MONA in Tasmania or the range of temporary ideas-led exhibitions at the Barbican in London, all of which focus on co-created experiences. The role of the curator and the nature of curation in these types of exhibitions "is less about orthodoxy and more of a place for invention" (Serota, 2013, cited in George, 2015: p. 37). This differs from the Tate Britain, which is a gallery presenting a major permanent collection of British art based on art-historian curatorial principles and one that offers a more contemplative experience Lord (2014). Recognition of the influence of differentiation strategies on curatorial roles and how brand experiences are designed and developed, may also shed light on how, curatorial roles may differ within the two different types of luxury retailer and their interpretations of what constitutes a luxury brand experience. In view of this, attention now turns towards a review of the role of the curator in the luxury retail environment.

2.3.3. Role of the Curator in the Luxury Retail Context

Despite the paucity of coverage in the literature, the term "curation" has been used increasingly over the past few years in industry in the context of luxury retail and branding (Gilmore, 2011). Gilmore (2011) states that at INNOVATE 2011 the term "curation" was used by speakers in a variety of ways and "it is a vital function of retail CMOs and senior marketing

executives because they are, above all, curators of their brand".

Branston (2013) states that at the InnoCos 2013 event it was observed that "curation is one of the strategies helping stores to thrive in this changing environment" (GCI, July/August 2013). It is observed that the word itself is borrowed from permanent art collections, thus in a retail context it implies that the products have been selected by a knowledgeable expert, a "best-in-class" selection (GCI, July/August 2013). In addition, curation is more than simple product mix tailoring as it has a stronger aspirational element, with curated stores featuring "an edited product mix, generally cross-brand, cross-price band and characterized by unexpected product combinations." (GCI July/August 2013).

The use of the term "curation" in the context of retail has also been referenced in an increasing number of articles in trade and press publication, examples of which are highlighted in Table 2.7 below.

Table 2.7: Examples of Trade/Press Publication References to Curation and Retail

Publication	Title	Description
Retail Week	Product Curation adds value to shopping, 29.9.13 http://www.retail-week.com/comment/comment-product-curation-adds-value-to-shopping/5053298.article (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Curation has become an indispensable tool for e-commerce retailers and bricks-and-mortar. Curation in retail is big business and will only get bigger.
Financial Times	The fine art of retail, 27.3.15 http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5e967e2c-aba1-11e4-b05a-00144feab7de.html (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Luxury stores are differentiating themselves by curating spaces and offering curated selection of goods.
Trend Reports	The Rise of Curated Retail and Its Impact on the Shopping Experience, 23.7.12 http://www.trendreports.com/article/curated-retail (Accessed 21st September 2015)	A number of curated retail innovations have featured on Trend Hunter showcasing the speed the trend is taking hold of the retail industry. Curated retail ensures focused shopping and product relevancy. Curated choices are authentic and influential on buying behaviour.
Euromonitor International Report	Curation in Beauty Retail: A Strategy with a Future? March 2014 http://www.euromonitor.com/curation-in-beauty-retail-a-strategy-with-a-future-/report (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Curation helps online and offline retailers to diversify and compete more effectively.
Luxury Daily	Storytelling in luxury marketing becomes interdisciplinary, 29.11.12 http://www.luxurydaily.com/storytelling-in-luxury-marketing-becomes-interdisciplinary/ (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Curation has become a trend and deeply affects the way we organize, transmit and receive information. Successful luxury marketing is by default associated with fine storytelling. Luxury marketing needs to take advantage of the skills that historians, archivists, visual designers and curators have to offer as the more interdisciplinary the brand's approach to marketing, the more complex the story is to be told.
Forbes	Why Curated Experiences are the New Future of Marketing, 5.11.13 http://www.forbes.com/sites/krisztinaholly/2013/11/05/why-experience-marketing-is-the-new-future-of-engagement/ (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Organisations are seeking to design and develop authentic and immersive experiences through the curatorial practices.
McKinsey	Luxury Lifestyle Beyond the Buzzwords, 19.10.13 www.mckinsey.com/~/media/…/10%20luxury%20lifestyle.ashx (Accessed 21st September 2015)	Luxury brands portray themselves as purveyors and curators of a luxury lifestyle, curating a holistic, luxury lifestyle brand experience

In addition, the increasing popularity of the term "curation" has not been restricted to just the business environment, with its use being observed in different creative industries and also, as a new and emerging discipline in fashion academia.[16] Williams (2009) states that curation, once a word rarely spoken outside the context of cultural institutions, is now a fashionable word among the aesthetically and creatively minded who appear to paste it on to any activity that involves editing and selecting. Balzer (2015, p. 111) observes that "if you work in fashion, you are probably curating in some way every day". Williams (2009) argues that in print-centric times, the term used was "edit" but now the word curate is code for a discerning eye and great taste. Williams (2009) claims that for some it is perceived to be a form of self-inflation as it implies "there is some clarity between what you do and what someone with an advanced degree who works at a museum does"[17]. However, Williams (2009) does recognise that for others it is not "hyperbole" but instead a description of the activity, for example, digital curation is not aggregated but sifts, sorts and curates and it is just about as much what is not there, as what is and therefore is a creative activity in itself.

In observation of the evolution of digital curation, the literature also acknowledges that there has been a democratisation and liberalisation of the word "curation" and it is being widely used outside of the arts and cultural environment as a way to describe adding value by people who provide qualitative judgement in the selection and interpretation of things, objects and ideas (e.g. Rosenbaum, 2011; Balzer, 2015; George, 2015). Rosenbaum (2011) claims that the value generated is in the human interpretation of information as computers can sort and aggregate data and generate lists, but without human interpretation it lacks clarity and mediation of meaning. Rosenbaum (2011) states that the unstoppable growth of the digital world and resulting "infoglut" has led to people pursuing two tactics to manage and find relevant and coherent information in this new landscape: technical (algorithmic) digital curation and social curation. However, it is the social, human curator who assembles and arbitrates information to draw attention to, contextualize and mediate meaning, who wields power through credibility and competence, and is ultimately the controller and broker of information (Rosenbaum, 2011). Maguire and Matthews (2012) concur and claim that the people who are selecting, framing, adding value and legitimizing information (or products) as valid, desirable or worthy through taste, authority, expertise and knowledge are cultural intermediaries. Maguire and Matthews (2012) state that the expertise of the cultural intermediary may be professional e.g. based on specialist qualifications such as a museum curator, or personal e.g. based on subjective preferences and a unique taste level that is viewed highly positively, e.g. a buyer or artistic director in luxury retail. However, both types of cultural intermediaries or curators, use human judgement to add value and influence through their selection of objects or ideas, interpretation of the objects or ideas and the focus

[16] The University of the Arts in London offer a MA Fashion Curation degree

[17] Source: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/04/fashion/04curate.html?_r=0 (Last accessed 14.9.15)

on “identity formation” of what things represent, mean and communicate (Maguire and Matthews, 2012).

2.3.3.1. Luxury and the Relationship to Art

In the context of the luxury retail environment, the literature proposes that luxury retailers are moving towards art, not just as a theme or campaign, but as a strategy central to the identity, structure and process of the luxury brand (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Berghaus et al, 2014; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011; Charlesworth, 2003). Baumgarth et al (2014) claim that 16% of all luxury brands worldwide are using visible cooperation with the arts in three ways, including limited editions with artists, philanthropic contributions and experimental collaborations. It is claimed that the shift towards art has even influenced formal organisational titles, with the change in the luxury brand designer title from ‘couturier’ to ‘artistic director’ due to the emphasis of these roles being held by artists (Dion and Arnould, 2011).

Whilst it is recognised that artists have been associated or collaborated with heritage luxury couture houses for a long time, it has been sporadic; whereas today’s linkage of art and luxury focuses on differentiation and is “focused putting luxury at the forefront of contemporaneity” and transforming non-art into art in order to gain depth, elevation and value (Kapferer, 2015: p. 82). Consequently, art is being perceived as being part of the overall luxury lifestyle proposition and intertwined with fashion: “art is becoming indistinguishable from lifestyle culture and the logic of fashion dominates how art is made visible” (Charlesworth, 2003: p. 3-4).

Hagtvegt and Patrick (2008) state that the objective of adopting an art-focused aesthetic strategy in luxury retail is to ensure that perceptions of luxury and exclusivity automatically spill over from the art onto the product, with which the art is associated, leading to enhanced product evaluation by the consumer. They describe that this “spilling over” and positive association is manipulated by the luxury retailer may be observed to represent perception transference, as observed in the literature such as a halo effect (Balzer and Sulsky, 1992), spontaneous trait transference (Skowronski et al, 1998), basking-in-reflected-glory phenomenon (Cialdini and de Nicholas, 1989) and contagion effects (Rozin et al, 1986).

Bourdieu (1986) claims that the consumption of art and culture is a power relation mechanism, with the distribution of society’s symbolic capital being mediated through a classificatory system of “taste”. The consumption of art through brands and their creation is motivated and supported by a contemporary system of social signification. Dion and Arnould (2011: p.503) also recognise that art creates distance and differentiation (also creating barriers to entry) and claim that luxury brands are auratic and similar to works of art as they

“possess an aura of authenticity which surrounded the original – nonmechanically reproducible – work, endowing it with qualities of uniqueness, distance and otherness.”

Kapferer and Bastien (2009) and Kapferer (2015) argue that luxury retailers are using “artification”, a process of transformation of non-art to art to circumvent a number of issues in the luxury market, for example the dilemma of growth. Kapferer (2015: p.79) states “artification is not varnish” but rather “a strategic transformation from the outside in, made possible by a brand’s proximity to artists and their integration in the value chain”. He proposes that this linkage may be conceptualised as an “Artification Ladder”. Kapferer (2015) claims that consumers want exclusive products and the positioning of art, which personifies those same traits, with luxury, artisanal products reinforces the authenticity of those luxury branded products. Consequently, the linkage of luxury products to art and cultural references is perceived to be a strategic attempt to elevate the status of the product to that of art (Joy et al, 2014).

In addition, Kapferer and Bastien (2012) claim that luxury is increasingly being managed by global groups, as opposed to artisanal family businesses, upon which the brand has based its ideological heritage story of craftsmanship and rarity. Consequently, it is proving more difficult for luxury to claim the artisanal story still exists in the face of mass production in new locations such as China. Kapferer (2015) highlights that the United Kingdom’s Advertising Standards Agency banned Louis Vuitton from using two of its adverts as they believed that the images misled customers into believing the products were made by hand when were actually made by a machine. Kapferer (2015: p. 71) argues that the “artification process thus is timely for a sector that is becoming increasingly less artisanal.”

A further element of Artification refers to collaborations with contemporary artists, who support the positioning of the luxury brand image to be innovative, fresh and also appeal to new and younger markets without risk of alienating its loyal customers due to the continued limited availability (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014).

However, whilst Joy et al (2014) agree with Kapferer and Bastien (2009) that luxury retailers are deploying art as a strategy to ensure continuous renewal, whilst protecting history and heritage, they claim that art is more than just a strategy. Joy et al (2014) also argue that art is also more than a means to sanctify the artistic director’s vision, as Dion and Arnould (2011) claim. Instead, Joy et al (2014) propose that luxury retailers are becoming art institutions in their own right, describing them as hybrid art-luxury brand “M (Art) World’s” which embody elements of both art galleries and museums within the context of luxury retail. Using the example of Louis Vuitton, Joy et al (2014) claim that SBLRs are taking on a curatorial role, evidenced by the luxury retailer’s architecture and interior design, use of similar exhibition-type lighting, artisanal merchandising techniques, collaborations with artists, products positioned alongside art for sale and sales associates also functioning as curators.

The authors state that the notion of M(Art) World involves three processes: curation, prestation, and co-creation. Drawing on Ames (1992), who is identified as one of the advocates of the traditional art-historian perspective of curation in Chapter 2.3.2. and Table 2.6, Joy et al (2014: p.356) claim that curation involves: "acquisition, care, research, exhibition, design, layout, and the imagining and construction of discourses". Curatorial attention is also paid to the display area's architecture and interior design, which is observed to mimic museum architecture and permanent collection exhibitions. The adoption of the traditional definition of curation associated with permanent collection exhibitions in museums suggests that Joy et al's (2014) interpretation of the role of curation, and the authors association of it with the creation of awe, reverence and adoration, is one that is associated with the traditional art-historian meaning of curation that focuses more on the interpretation of heritage (Ames, 1992). In addition, relating this to Lord's (2014) 'Five Modes of Experience' by type of exhibition, as described in Chapter 2.3.1.2 and Table 2.4, it also suggests that the nature of the brand experience is one that emulates one found in art-related permanent collection exhibitions. Lord (2014) describes this type of exhibition as one that focuses on art, with the display of objects to be appreciated in themselves. The experience is described as being relatively passive, though intellect and emotions are engaged, with the transformative experience consisting in the enhanced appreciation of the meaning and quality of the art or object (Lord, 2014). Joy et al's (2014: p. 357) claim that the luxury brand is "viewed as an aesthetic product (as a cultural artefact) worthy of appreciation" and their reference to Hollenbeck et al (2008: p. 351) that the product "becomes a piece of art in and of itself" is suggested to relate closely to Lord's (2014) description of the experience in a permanent art collection exhibition.

The second process that Joy et al (2014) refer to is titled "Prestation" which they claim relates to spellbinding experiences orchestrated by highly trained employees. This includes staging and brand narratives communicated by employees, imbued with an evangelical reverence for the brand and focused on creating consumer loyalty. Joy et al (2014: p. 351) claim that this process refers to a form of mediation in terms of the store "providing an aesthetic experience for those that enjoy art, and an educational service to assist them in acquiring art appreciation". The authors, however, do not discuss in detail the nature of mediation and also the level of art education and training that sales staff receive regarding the knowledge required for mediating art appreciation. This raises the question whether the curatorial skills possessed by the scholarly curator associated with permanent art collections, as described by Ames (1992) and referenced by Joy et al (2014), are the same skills that the sales staff possess.

The third process described by Joy et al (2014), "Co-creation" relates to consumers taking and shaping the environment, the people and the brand to create their own meanings. Joy et al (2014: p. 357) claim that "Louis Vuitton selects its product line, in part with on-going collaboration with well-known artists; but without customers' interpretations of and

involvement with the place, people, and brand, Louis Vuitton would lose its ability to extend and sustain itself." The authors state that this process is important in order to understand how consumers and brand collaborate and create the luxury brand experience. However, Joy et al (2014) do not expand on the nature or characteristics of this process, nor do they discuss the dynamic between the different roles of the consumer and brand, or how they attempt to measure and understand the collaboration and its influence on the luxury brand experience, suggesting a limitation to the value and validity of this argument.

To summarise, this chapter has examined the different perspectives of how art is employed as a theme, differentiation strategy and new retail model, and how, consequently, it may influence luxury brand experience. Building on the themes identified regarding the use of art as a strategy to differentiate, the evolution of luxury retailers into hybrid art institutions and curatorial activities associated with permanent art collections, attention is now focused on the role of the curator.

2.3.3.2. Luxury and Art and The Role of the Curator in the Luxury Retail Environment

In the literature, three key perspectives were observed regarding the role of the curator in the luxury retail environment and are reviewed in turn.

The first perspective is that the corporation itself is taking on a curatorial role and responsibilities. Joy et al (2014) claim that until recently, despite being long collectors of art, corporations had not been part of the collaborative community between art dealers and curators (Joy and Sherry, 2003). Now, however, they argue that, using Louis Vuitton as an example, corporations themselves are becoming patrons of the arts and taking on a curatorial role to invest in relationships with art and artists, collect works of art, create exhibitions and relate products to historical artefacts, much like in a museum, even to the point of distancing the brand from the commercial aspect (Joy et al, 2014).

Joy et al (2014: p. 358) use a quote from the ex-CEO of Louis Vuitton, Yves Carcelle from the opening of the first art exhibition at the National Museum of China in Beijing to highlight this point: "I don't like the word "commercial" to be honest, when you are in the creative world. You need to do what you think is nice. Sales come in addition. That's why you will not see anything commercial in the exhibition. People buy 157 years of history; they buy a sense of craftsmanship, the emotion of travel in the 19th century. We hope customers feel more emotional about the brand. For me, luxury is all about emotion."

It is suggested that this perspective of the role of the curator is one that shares similar characteristics described by second, traditional perspective of a curator as outlined in Chapter 2.3.2 and Table 2.6 by Ames (1992) and Horie (1986). The focus on the collection of art in

order to preserve and acknowledge its authenticity, rarity and value is similar to that of a curator of a permanent collection exhibition in a museum. The positioning of Louis Vuitton as a public collector with the curatorial skills and abilities associated with a permanent collection curator suggests that the organisation possesses knowledge, authority and an expertise regarding art, which transfers to the luxury brand, described as trait transference and outlined Chapter 2.3.3.1. (Skowronski et al, 1998).

However, unlike the permanent collection curator in a museum, it is suggested that the sole luxury brand retailer is commercially focused in its association with art. Despite Joy et al's (2014) use of the quote by Yves Carcelle to claim that Louis Vuitton is distancing the commercial element of the brand from art, the SBLR nonetheless makes a link between the luxury brand attributes, such as its history, craftsmanship and the emotion of travel with the art exhibition. By referencing the luxury brand attributes in connection to the art exhibition, it is suggested that Yves Carcelle was constructing a positive reality of the luxury brand that connects the two in the minds of the audience as described in Chapter 2.2.1. (Louis and Lombart, 2010). It is suggested, therefore, that Joy et al (2014) contradict themselves as Louis Vuitton was not distancing itself from the commercial, but rather constructing a reality that Joy et al (2014: p.358) themselves refer to: "LVMH has constructed an artistic identity".

A second perspective is that curators now exist in luxury retail, manifested in the form of a creative director or artistic director, representing both the ideological leader of the brand vision or the creative icon of the brand itself. Dion and Arnould (2011) claim that a successful luxury brand strategy depends on the charismatic aura, rather than individual traits, of the creative director who utilises museological techniques to communicate an ideology of expression. Dion and Arnould (2011) claim that the leadership of the creative or artistic director transmits a personal ideology of taste and aesthetics and technical excellence, which serves to direct the brand and brand experience. Moreover, the creative or artistic director are often artists themselves, who seek to re-write the rules and who possess a strong creative vision, therefore further cementing the relationship between art and luxury.

Joy et al (2014: p.357) concur with Dion and Arnould (2011) that the ideology of the artistic director influences the brand experience, in so much that it elevates the luxury brand to the status of art. However, they also refer to the artistic director's influence on the curation of a collection itself through the collaboration with artists e.g. Takashi Murakami. Through the selection of artists to collaborate with and create a collection of luxury goods that are at once perceived as products and works of art, Joy et al (2014) claim that "much as curators create collections and exhibitions, the artistic directors in luxury stores perform a similar function". Joy et al (2014) propose that the curatorial role the artistic director plays is one that represents artistic validity.

This perspective of the artistic director as a curator is one that refers to the development of an ideology that influences the creation of a collection and also the experience. The experience

described by Dion and Arnould (2011: p.513) is one that generates awe and reverence and constitutes “a more passive role for consumers in more museum like environments, environments which conforms to the logic of adoration (of the designer)”. This suggests that the artistic director is using curatorial practices akin to permanent art collection curatorial practices to deliver a similar, passive and contemplative experience, as described by Lord (2014) in Chapter 2.3.1.2, Table 2.4.

In addition, as outlined by Joy et al (2014) it is also the artistic director role that is responsible for designing and building a collection and consequently, is recognised for its artistic authority. These characteristics may be likened to the second, traditional perspective of a curator, as highlighted by Ames (1992) and Horie (1986) as the curator presents a specific ideology or point of view that determines the nature of the curated collection, which is reinforced and validated by scholarly authority. Whilst the nature of the authority differs, it is suggested that the emphasis on technical knowledge and excellence, does not. A further similarity is that the transmitting of the ideology is curated and communicated in a predetermined way, with little opportunity for mediation of meaning or co-creation of experiences.

A third perspective is that the role of the curator is one that is played by employees, who are responsible for the curation of the aesthetic visual display and brand experiences through selected narratives (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014). Arnould et al (1998) claim that employees, sales people in the store, are key to transmitting the luxury brand ideology. Dion and Arnould (2011) state that luxury retailers achieve the auratic status through contamination by similarity and by contiguity of the art world in store. The authors argue that role of the sales personnel is to foster contagion through similarity between brand and fine art by acting as curators in museums and delivering substantial staging, narratives, displaying products as objects to create a special experience (Dion and Arnould, 2011).

Joy et al (2014: p. 350) also state that luxury store personnel are emulating skills associated with museum curators and provide an example of the Louis Vuitton flagship store in Hong Kong, where they state: “The LV flagship stores in Hong Kong highlight museum curator’s emphasis on aesthetic values, scholarship, art history and provenance.” The authors claim that the role of the curator is to develop a collection of products that serve as the filter and authority of taste, create unique experiences that connect the target audience with art and culture and develop curated brand experiences that reinforce the connection to art and culture of a “M(Art)World.” Twitchell (2003) also states that the value of a curation of products in the retail environment does not necessarily reside in the individual objects themselves, but rather the perception of a special selection of curated products by the retailer or the employees.

This perspective of the role of the curator as sales associates who curate physical displays in store and also communicate narratives that support the curation of the brand experience itself

is one that shares similarities with the 4th perspective outlined in Chapter 2.3.2 and Table 2.6. The 4th perspective is one that identifies the role of the curator as the mediator between objects and people, which the sales associates are employed to do by transmitting the brand ideology through brand narratives and delivering services on a stage that defines the luxury brand and brings the brand values to life (e.g. Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Berry et al, 2006; Haelsig et al, 2007; Fog et al, 2005; Kozinets et al, 2010). However, unlike the meaning of the curator as a mediator in the museology context, which emphasizes the facilitation of an individually constructed reality, interpretation and understanding (e.g. Freitas, 2011; McDonald, 2011; Kreps, 2011); the meaning of mediation in the luxury retail context is one that is outlined in Chapter 2.2.1 and refers to the mediation of a socially constructed reality that reinforces the brand identity and ideology by ensuring all elements of the brand are consistent (Louis and Lombart, 2010). Further, the mediation of experience is limited as the role of the consumer is passive (Dion and Arnould, 2011).

2.4. Literature Review Conclusion and Identification of Research Development Gaps and Opportunities

The literature review focused on two sections. The first section of the literature review examined the definitions of a brand, luxury brand and brand experience in the retail environment. The second section reviewed the definition of curation and the role of the curator.

With regards to the first section, in the review of the luxury market, it was noted that despite there existing only a small number of luxury organisations, they represent a hugely significant contribution from an economic perspective and one that indicates continued positive growth, validating the importance of the research in this area. Two key types of luxury retailers, sole brand and MBLRs, were examined and a number of differences were highlighted, including, for example, the meaning and symbolic nature of the luxury brand itself, the focus on exclusivity and tightly controlled distribution by a SBLR versus the more broader omni-channel focus of a MBLR. However, similarities were also identified including the shared objective of delivering a seamless brand experience that creates emotional connections and enables customers to enact self-identities.

Regarding the review of brands, it was noted that the meaning of a brand is a complex one that goes beyond a list of personality traits, functional features or a visual identity and represents a psychological construct that enables customers to express aspirational self-identities, construct realities or even relieve tensions between customer needs and aspirations. Secondly, it was also observed that positive associations are formed if the brand actively engages with the customer, suggesting that a key requirement of the retailer is to

invest in the customer relationship and support the mediation of the customers constructed reality through management of the different facets of the brand consistently and seamlessly.

A third theme identified was that whilst a considerable amount of attention has been paid to defining a brand, little has been written regarding luxury brands. Instead, what has evolved is a "patchwork of definitions" in the literature (Miller and Mills, 2012: p. 42) However, two key perspectives were identified which refer to a top-down, management perspective and one that refers to a socially constructed interpretation created by consumers. The third, integrated perspective, Tynan et al's (2010) definition of a luxury brand was observed to offer a bridge between the two perspectives as it extends the managerial perspective to that of the customer by acknowledging that customers are an inherent part of co-creation of luxury brands. In light of the focus of this research, it is important to identify the distinction between the top-down, classification management definition and the customer co-creation definition of a luxury brand, with regards to how luxury retailers design and develop their luxury brands and their approach to the design and development of luxury brand experiences.
A fourth theme refers to how brand experiences may consist of various multi-sensory touchpoints but depend on a strong emotional connection between the brand and the customer, derived from experiences that offer intangible emotional benefits and stimulate, entertain and educate. A number of different perspectives were reviewed that highlighted the dimensions of brand experience and how they influence the retail environment, including environmental psychology models, store design and atmospherics. However, two issues were noted. Firstly, that they tend to focus more on the characterisation of customer responses to the environment and secondly, that the dimensions are examined discretely and not holistically. Foster and McLelland (2015) claim that many retailers consider brand experience elements individually, like a checklist and not in a complete way that a customer experiences them, which impedes negatively on the brand experience delivered. Foster and McLelland (2015) suggest that the design of a holistic brand concept or a themed retail environment is important as it enables the retailer to deliver a differentiated brand experience. This is critical in the discussion of the role of curation in the design of a brand experience, and whether it offers the ability to design holistically and offer a differentiated experience.

The fifth theme referred to the perspective that brand experiences in luxury retail relate to the ability of retailers to develop partnerships and involve different types and levels of customer participation throughout the experience. In addition, that the relational aspect of brand experience is more influential in generating partnerships and encouraging customer participation, than the physical aspect of brand experience. It was also noted that in light of the rise of omnichannel retailing, brand experiences need to offer customers seamless partnership-focused experiences and are not bolted on experiences e.g. social media as an independent channel. However, it was noted that there is very little coverage on both the explicit nature and types of individual roles responsible for delivering a partnership-approach

omnichannel brand experience throughout the luxury retail organization, or the processes to support them, indicating a further gap in the literature. In light of the focus of this research, this is an important element to consider when examining curation and curatorial roles responsible for designing and developing brand experience.

The sixth and final theme refers to the acknowledgement that luxury retailers need to design experiences that communicate brand values on an emotional level, which are congruent with and champion those of the customer. However, it was recognised that the stimulation needs and emotions of the customer vary throughout a brand experience and stages or zones of experience may also need to vary. This implies that luxury retailers pursuing an omnichannel strategy need to design experiences through channels that are congruent at different stages of the experience to meet the customer's needs.

A number of gaps in the literature were also identified which are highlighted in Table 2.8. The literature review then moved on to the second section regarding the role of the curator and curation. This section included a review of the types of exhibitions in order to provide the context of the definition of the curator in the cultural environment and to create a base upon which to compare with when reviewing curation in luxury retail. It was observed that a number of forms of exhibition exist and are emerging, for example temporary idea-led exhibitions, which has led to a greater emphasis on the design and development of an immersive visitor experience in curatorial practices. It was also acknowledged in the literature that cultural institutions are focusing increasingly on the visitor experience they offer and five different modes of experience were identified. The processes of designing and developing exhibitions were also examined in the context of Roppola's (2014) Relational Model.

Drawing on the similarities identified between luxury retailers and exhibition types observed in Chapter 2.3.1.1 and the luxury brand experience themes in Chapter 2.2.5, it was observed that they may help to interpret the findings of this research regarding the role of curation in the design and development of experiences across the two different types of luxury retailer. For example, in light of Seo and Buchanan-Oliver's (2015) statement that luxury brand experiences have not been clearly defined and also recognition in the literature that luxury brands have traditionally been defined by a managerial-centric perspective, despite recognition that experiences may be co-created with customers, the application of museology literature e.g. Roppola's (2014) Relational Model is suggested to be a useful framework when attempting to interpret how brand experience is designed and developed, and how the role of curation plays a part. In addition, it was also observed that SBLRs share a number of similarities with permanent collection exhibitions and MBLRs with temporary, ideas-led exhibitions, which suggests that the nature and type of curation and curatorial roles may differ by type of luxury retailer regarding the design and development of a luxury brand experience. In light of the similarities identified between MBLRs and the more recent temporary ideas-led

exhibition curatorial practices in Chapter 2.3.1.2 and Table 2.5, it is suggested that there is a gap in the literature and that further research of MBLRs may provide new perspectives.

Definitions of the role of the curator were also reviewed, resulting in the observation that curation is a complex concept with its meaning varying according to the changing nature of the cultural institution. Five different perspectives regarding the role of curation were observed and compared. In light of cultural institutions focusing more on the visitor experience and the growth of temporary ideas-led exhibitions, it was observed that the role of the curator appears to be increasingly one as a cultural mediator, mediating meaning between objects and people through the design and development of co-created experiences.

The role of the curator in luxury retail was also reviewed. In summary, it appears that the literature coverage of the role of the curator in the luxury retail environment suffers from a number of shortcomings. Firstly, the number of authors who reference curation is extremely limited. Secondly, the authors that do refer to curation do so only through the lens of sole SBLRs, which indicates that there is a considerable gap in the literature regarding MBLRs and the role of curation. Thirdly, the authors only refer to the role of curation, or museological techniques associated with permanent collection curatorial practices, in the context of a new luxury retail model, for example, Joy et al's (2014) "M(Art)World" or as an alternative retail strategy that relates to adoration and the charisma of the artistic director (Dion and Arnould, 2011).

Curator roles in luxury retail were identified in three forms: the corporation itself, as a patron of the arts and collector of art; the creative or artistic director who possesses expert knowledge, is a publicly recognised artistic authority, symbolises the brand ideology and uses museological techniques to design experiences, and lastly, the luxury retailer customer-facing staff, or "front line personnel" as described by Dion and Arnould (2011: p. 513), who are responsible for transmitting the brand ideology, the in-store curation of the aesthetic visual display of products and also for "creating the experience and a more passive role for customers in the museum-like environment". Collaborators were also identified as supporting these curatorial roles. It was observed that the literature describes the role of the curator as one that resembles the traditional art-historian curator role defined over 25 years ago (e.g. Ames, 1992, Horie, 1986) and which refers to permanent art collection exhibitions, as outlined in the description of a traditional art-historian curator in Chapter 2.3.2. Table 2.6, in the description of a permanent collection exhibition in Chapter 2.3.1.1 and lastly, in the description of a permanent art collection exhibition experience presented by Lord (2014) in 2.3.1.2. Table 2.4.

It was observed, therefore, that the role of the curator and curatorial practices as described in the luxury retail literature differ significantly from the definition of the contemporary mediator

curator role in the cultural environment. However, it was observed that in both environments that the role of the curator is far from being null and void and is influential regarding the design and development of the brand experience for visitors or customers. The importance of the delivery of an experience in both environments, suggest that there are similarities in the pursuit of designing and developing the brand experience, which reinforces the justification of the focus of this research. Table 2.8 highlights the gaps that relate to the research objectives and the two gaps (Gaps 6 and 7) that will be addressed by this study.

Table 2.8: Summary of Identified Gaps in the Literature

Summary of Gaps Identified in the Literature and Opportunities for Future Research			
Gap	**Thesis Section**	**Description**	**Supports/Does Not Support the Research Objectives**
Gap 1	2.1.2.2.	The difference in which the two types of luxury retailers, sole brand and multi brand retailers, create luxury brand experience has received limited coverage in the literature (e.g. Ailawadi and Keller, 2004; Burt and Davies, 2010)	A close examination and comparison of the two different types of luxury brand experience is not the focus of this research or the research objectives. However, through the lens of how the role of curation may influence the design and development of brand experience, the findings may provide some new insight that supports this gap.
Gap 2	2.2.2.	Luxury brands are a special form of branding and a new concept that has received limited attention in the literature (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Reyneke et al, 2011; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015)	Whilst the nature in which a luxury retailer defines itself as a luxury brand has an influence on how it may design and deliver a brand experience, the examination of luxury brands per se is not the focus of this research and does not specifically support the research objectives.
Gap 3	2.2.2.	Many references in the literature regarding a definition of luxury brands relate to a management-centric perspective. There is an opportunity for further research into an alternative and more integrated management-customer perspective (e.g. Tynan et al, 2010; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015)	Whilst it is important to understand the differences between the different management and customer-centric perspectives of a luxury brand, it is not a research objective to develop an integrated definition of a luxury brand.
Gap 4	2.2.3., 2.2.4. and 2.2.5.	Luxury brand experiences have not yet been clearly defined in the literature (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015) Luxury brand experience is described in a checklist fashion and by experience dimension, and not in a holistic way that a customer experiences it. This severely limits a retailer's ability to immerse a customer in a brand experience and to create a genuinely differentiated experience. Instead the literature focuses on customer responses to an experience. It is suggested that this is a gap, and therefore an opportunity to examine luxury brand experience more holistically (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Rayburn and Voss, 2013)	Research objectives 2 and 3 focus on an exploration of how curation manifests itself in luxury retail and the impact it has on the design and development of brand experience. It is, however, not the aim of the research to create a definition of luxury brand experience per se.
Gap 5	2.2.5.1.	Storytelling has been identified in the literature as an area that has received scant attention to date in the context of brand management, yet well-told stories have the potential to influence consumer brand experience, suggesting that this offers an opportunity for further research (e.g. Lundqvist et al, 2013; Escalas, 2004b; Shankar et al, 2001)	Whilst storytelling may contribute to the delivery of the luxury brand experience, and will be examined in this context, which supports research objective 2, it is not the focus of this research to examine the concept and different manifestations of storytelling.
Gap 6	2.2.5.1.	There is little in the literature that examines the processes required to bring the luxury brand experience to life. There is an opportunity to examine in greater detail luxury brand experience from a holistic perspective. Several similarities were identified between the evolving nature of exhibitions (and their new focus on design of experiences) and luxury retailers, suggesting that an area of opportunity may include drawing on Roppola's (2014) Relational Model in the context of the processes involved in designing and developing brand experiences	This gap will be explored in this research: The research objective 2 is to explore the nature in which curation is brought to life in luxury retailing.
Gap 7	2.3.3.	There is little in literature that examines the role of the curator and meaning of curation in the luxury retail environment. Existing references relate to sole brand luxury retailers only and through the lens of a sole brand luxury retail differentiation strategy (e.g. Kapferer (2015) and "Artification"), a new retail model (e.g. Joy et al (2014) and "M(Art) World") or the ideology and charisma of the artistic director of a sole brand luxury retailer (e.g. Dion and Arnould (2011) and "Assembling Charisma Through Art and Magic") however, similarities were observed between these existing references and permanent collection curator roles suggesting an additional area for further research	This gap will be explored in this research: This research aim and research objectives 1 (to explore the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation) and 3 (to identify and explore the curatorial roles in luxury retail organisations) both refer to this gap.

3. Research Methodology and Method

3.1. Background

The research aim of this thesis is to explore the meaning of curation in the luxury retail environment and its role in the design and development of the brand experience in the luxury retail environment.

From the beginning of the DBA study, the critical literature review identified a paucity of attention in the literature regarding both the design and development of luxury brand experience in stores and curation in the luxury retail environment. For that reason, the critical literature review took the form of an extensive research into multiple disciplines, including from the realms of curation in cultural institutions, and a pilot study was undertaken to explore the context of designing and developing brand experience.

Following a pilot study, involving 4 face-to-face 1-2 hour interviews with senior professionals in luxury retail, two key findings were observed. Firstly, luxury retailers, such as SBLRs and MBLRs, are developing and curating concepts to continually design and deliver innovative brand experiences. Secondly, that as a consequence, curatorial practices, associated with the development and curation of the retail concepts, have a significant and growing influence on the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment. However, despite the observed commonality of usage of the term ‘curation’ and discussion of curatorial roles in the process of designing and developing brand experience, little was formalised or mentioned in the literature. Therefore, the research focus turned towards understanding the concept of curation, in order to fully understand its role and influence upon the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment.

Following the pilot study, in the faculty annual review of the research in 2014, it was proposed that an examination of the role of the curator and curatorial practices in the museum and cultural institution environments, where the practice and profession of curation originally stems from, may provide a new lens or perspective which could support the formal development of curation practices or strategies in the luxury retail environment. Therefore, a further literature review was undertaken, focusing on an additional and new discipline, museology, in order to identify and understand the principles of curation. This new and refined critical literature research supported the refinement and re-structuring of the data collection approach and focus.

3.2. Research Approach, Method and Design

3.2.1. Research Approach

The research focus and philosophical approach was guided by an interpretive epistemological position, founded on the understanding that the curation of the design and development of brand experience in luxury retail and museum retail environments is:

- Subjective: reality consists of people's subjective experiences of the external world (e.g. Reeves and Hedberg, 2003)

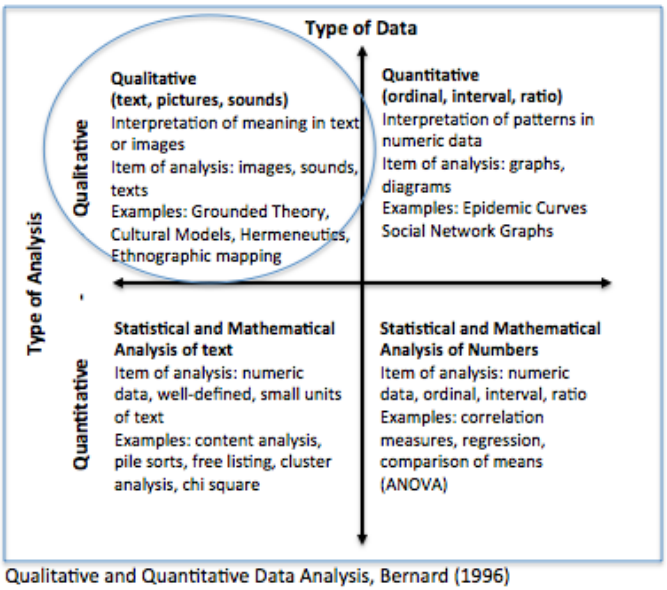
- Access to the individual's perceived brand experience of the curated luxury retail or museum retail environment reality is through social constructions

- Underpinned by observation and interpretation, drawing on influences and making sense as the situation emerges (e.g. Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994)

It adopts an inductive approach and focuses on qualitative methods that maximise reflexivity and the development of a holistic perspective.

The approach can be seen to fit in Saunders et al (2012) classification under "Induction" approach. Bernard's (1996) Quantitative and Qualitative Matrix highlights how the nature of the data influences the type of analysis and, where circled, this research position.

Figure 3.1: Bernard (1996) Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis

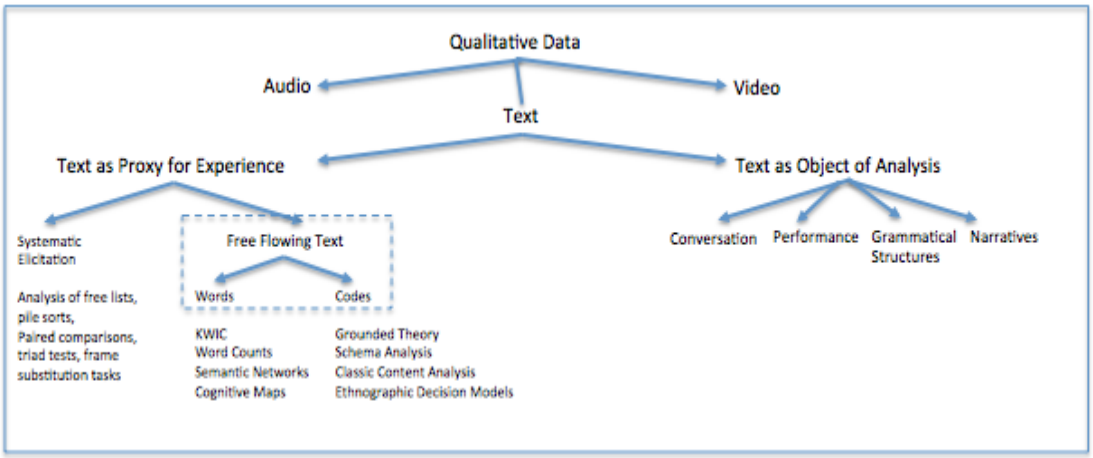


Qualitative and Quantitative Data Analysis, Bernard (1996)

The focus of this research proposal is exploratory and content-driven.[18]

This approach is summarised by Bernard and Ryan (1998) below:

Figure 3.2: Bernard and Ryan's (1998) Typology of Qualitative Research and Analysis



From an ontological perspective, the subject matter is socially constructed, subjective and may change. From an epistemological perspective, the subject matter is concerned with subjective meanings and social phenomena (Saunders et al, 2012). The research is recognized to be value-bound, as the researcher is part of what is being researched and will be subjective (Heron, 1996). As a result, it is proposed that the most appropriate data collection refers to small samples of interviews, which are qualitative and offer the opportunity for providing deeper insight (Guest et al, 2012).

The design of the research is based on a qualitative method consisting of 17 face-to-face interviews lasting between 1 to 2 hours, utilising thematic analysis techniques to analyse the data. The 17 interview participants who were at the time of the interviews, employed to either design, develop or contribute to brand experience, product ranges, exhibitions and displays in either a luxury retail or a cultural and art environment, for example a museum, gallery or cultural institution.

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[18] For example, this research approach focuses on, and may be described as sharing the following characteristics described, below:

- What do people think about X, what do they consider about Y?
- Codes and categories are not pre-determined
- Codes are derived from data versus hypotheses
- Data is generated and is primary in nature, versus existing data
- The research looks for key words, trends, themes or ideas in the data that will help outline the analysis before any analysis takes place

  Exploratory analyses are used to generate hypotheses for further study and build theoretical models

3.2.2. Research Sampling Strategy

With regards to the sampling strategy adopted, it is recognised that the sampling approach selected has a profound effect on the quality of the research (e.g. Bernard and Ryan, 2010; Coyne, 1997). In view of the research question and the three research objectives, the unit of sampling is defined as 'individuals who are senior professionals and practitioners responsible for, or contribute to, the design and development of experience in the luxury retail environment and cultural institutions'. The focus on individuals across both the luxury retail and cultural environments who are knowledgeable, able to offer multiple viewpoints regarding curation and design of experiences, and can support the development of a holistic picture of the research topic is observed to be essential in light of the paucity in the literature (Guest et al, 2013). It is recognised, however, that due to the breadth of luxury retailers and cultural institutions, two samples are required, firstly of the organisations and secondly, the individuals. In addition, with regards to the identification of target sample individuals, it was identified that it may require an inductive or emergent sampling strategy.

The sampling approach taken is a non-probabilistic, purposive or judgment one as the selection of participants is based on the purpose of their involvement in the research (Guest et al, 2013) and according to eligibility criteria relevant to the research objectives (Patton, 2002). The rationale for adopting a purposive or judgment approach for this research is to specifically seek highly knowledgeable participants "from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance of the purpose of the inquiry" (Patton, 2002: p.230). It was recognised therefore, that the implementation of the purposive approach would require sampling eligibility criteria. However, it is acknowledged that sampling methods are not mutually exclusive (Bernard and Ryan, 2010) and three different sampling approaches were integrated to develop the sample, including the selection of types of environment, organisation and individual roles to interview. The sampling eligibility criteria to develop the sample were guided by the three research objectives and are presented in Table 3.1 below which draws on Patton's (2002) "Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods Framework":

Table 3.1: Sampling Eligibility Criteria

Development of the Sample	Sampling Type	Sample Characteristics	Eligibility Criteria Used	Relation to the Research Objective
Step 1: Selection of Organisations in the Luxury Retail and Cultural Environments	Homogeneous Sampling in the Luxury Retail Environment	Sample is similar on one or more dimensions e.g. the organisation is within the luxury retail environment, sells luxury brands and delivers a luxury brand experience	An organisation that is located within the luxury retail environment and is a luxury retailer that sells luxury brands and delivers a luxury brand experience	Relevant to all three research objectives, including: 1. To explore the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation in luxury retail, 2. To explore and identify the ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment, and 3. To explore the nature in which curation is brought to life in luxury retailing
	Homogeneous Sampling in the Cultural Institution Environment	Sample is similar on one or more dimensions e.g. the organisation is situated within the cultural environment and involves curation of exhibitions and offers an experience to visitors	An organisation that is located within the cultural environment and is a cultural institution or centre that curates exhibitions and delivers an experience to visitors	Relevant to all three research objectives to provide context, in light of, firstly, the paucity in the research regarding understanding of curation and curatorial practices, and secondly, that the origins of curation stem from museology and has historically been associated with cultural institutions.
Step 2: Selection of Types of Organisations in the Luxury Retail and Cultural Environments	Maximum Variation Sampling in the Luxury Retail Environment	Purposely selecting a wide range of cases to get variation on dimensions of interest	Identification of different types of organisations e.g. multi brand and sole brand luxury retailers that design and develop luxury brand experiences	The inclusion and examination of different types of luxury retailers is relevant to all three research objectives with regards to addressing the 3 research objectives, including: 1. To explore the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation in luxury retail, 2. To explore and identify the ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment, and 3. To explore the nature in which curation is brought to life in luxury retailing
	Maximum Variation Sampling in the Cultural Institution Environment	Purposely selecting a wide range of cases to get variation on dimensions of interest	Identification of different types of cultural institutions and organisations e.g. established national museums with permanent collections, cultural centres with temporary, ideas-led exhibitions, galleries, hybrid gallery-store	The inclusion and examination of different types of cultural organisations e.g. national museums with permanent collections and cultural centres with temporary, ideas-led exhibitions supports the aim to identify a variation on the dimensions of interest across all three of the research objectives
Step 3: Selection of Individuals in the Luxury Retail and Cultural Organisations	Maximum Variation Sampling in the Luxury Retailer Organisation	Purposely selecting a wide range of types of individual to get a variation on dimensions of perspectives	Identification of different types of senior roles within a luxury brand retail organisation who are responsible for the delivery of, or contribute to, the design and development of brand experience	Relevant to all three research objectives, including: 1. To explore the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation in luxury retail, 2. To explore and identify the ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment, and 3. To explore the nature in which curation is brought to life in luxury retailing
	Maximum Variation Sampling in the Cultural Organisation	Purposely selecting a wide range of types of individual to get a variation on dimensions of perspectives	Identification of different types of roles that possess curatorial responsibility or contribute to the curatorial process in the context of the design and development of a visitor experience	Relevant to all three research objectives, as outlined in Steps 1 and 2 above The inclusion of different individuals employed in cultural institutions in the capacity of a curator or with varying degrees of curatorial responsibility supports the aim to identify a variation on the dimensions of interest across all three of the research objectives

3.2.2.1. Development of the Study Population

The study population refers to the entire group of elements that this research would like to study (Guest et al, 2013). In light of the unit of sampling being an individual who is a senior professional or practitioner responsible for, or who contributes to, the design and development of experience in the luxury retail environment and cultural institutions, the study population was considered to relate to all individuals working in luxury brand retail organisations and cultural institutions that are responsible for, or contribute to, the design and delivery of an experience.

The study population may include multiple populations, as outlined by the four identified below:

1. Curators in cultural institutions who are responsible for designing, developing and delivering the curated exhibition, installation, collection or experience

2. Professionals in cultural institutions who are responsible for working with curators to deliver the visitor experience

3. Senior professionals in luxury retail responsible for the design and development of the curated exhibition, display, collection, installation or experience

4. Exhibition professionals, e.g. consultants, responsible for designing and developing an exhibition or installation for the desired brand, customer or visitor experience

3.2.2.2. Development of the Study Sampling Frame

The sample frame is defined as a list of all the elements in a study population and defined by the study population (Guest et al, 2013). It is, however, associated with deductive, quantitative studies and therefore for the purpose of this qualitative study, refers to the list of sources used to identify and select the organisations and individuals in the study population and research sample. The sources included an online search of luxury retail and cultural institution organisation websites and the identification of the senior management team professionals and practitioners within luxury retail and cultural institution organisations, drawn from secondary sources such as company reports, press releases, reviews and interviews. Existing professional networks and work connections were also used as a source.

3.2.2.3. Development of the Study Sample

Drawing on the sources highlighted in 3.2.2.1 and utlising the eligibility criteria outlined in Table 3.1, 17 senior professionals and practitioners working in the fields of both luxury retail and cultural environments for established organisations, who were responsible for, or contribute to, the design and development of experience at the time of the interview process, were selected.[19]

Table 3.2 highlights the breakdown of the types of individuals selected for the sample:

[19] Please see Appendix 3 for a description of the sample luxury retail and cultural organisations

Table 3.2: Breakdown of Interview Participant Types in the Study Sample

Interview Participant Type	Definition	Number of Interview Participants (Total 17)
1	Curators in cultural institutions who are responsible for designing, developing and delivering the curated exhibition, installation, collection or experience	7
2	Professionals in cultural Institutions who are responsible for working with curators to deliver the visitor experience	3
3	Senior professionals in luxury retail responsible for the design and development of the curated exhibition, display, collection, installation or experience	6
4	Exhibition professionals, e.g. consultants, responsible for designing and developing an exhibition or installation for the desired brand, customer or visitor experience	1

Table 3.3 presents the profiles of the selected individuals in the sample, with a coding reference for each participant. The reference codes comprise of five codes that are used in the subsequent findings and discussion chapters: “C” for cultural institution, “G” for gallery, “R” for retail, “RC” for retail and cultural institution and “EC” for experience consultant. Table 3.3 also highlights the order in which the participants were interviewed.

Table 3.3: Profiles of the Individuals Selected for the Study Sample

Participant	Reference Code	Type of Industry	Employer/ Organisation	Title	Previous Employment/ Background
1	C1	Cultural Institution	The British Museum	Director of Buying and Retail	Senior Management at Tesco PLC
2	G2	Cultural Institution	Richard Saltoun Gallery	Curator	Sothebys Fine Art
3	RC2	Cultural Institution	Studio Voltaire and House of Voltaire	Director	Artist, Serpentine Gallery Curation and Fundraising
4	RC1	Cultural Institution	Previous: The Design Museum, The British Museum	Retail General Manager	Retail General Manager at The Design Museum and The British Museum
5	R2	Luxury Retail	Liberty	Director of Visual Identity	Fine Art
6	C3	Cultural Institution	The Barbican	Curator	Design and Architecture
7	R7	Luxury Retail/ Cultural Institution	Mario Testino	Creative Director and Director of Creative Enterprises	Creative Director at Conran, Habitat, Wedgewood
8	C2	Cultural Institution	Somerset House	Director of Exhibitions and Learning	Curator at the Design Museum and Somerset House
9	R6	Luxury Retail	Liberty	Creative Director and Head of Design for Accessories	Designer
10	R1	Luxury Retail	Matchesfashion.com	Director of Brand and Communications	Brand PR and Communications
11	G1	Cultural Institution	Photomonitor Curation	Editor, Curator	Gallery Manager, James Hyman Fine Art
12	R5	Luxury Retail	Liberty	Director of Buying and Merchandising	Buying Director, Selfridges
13	C5	Cultural Institution	Somerset House	Director, Somerset House Trust	Director of Programming Victoria & Albert, Conservator Ashmolean Museum
14	C4	Independent Consultant	Independent Curator for Museums, Galleries, Private Clients	Varied clients – museums and galleries	Curator at Purdy Hicks Gallery, Curator, The Royal Collection
15	R3	Luxury Retail	Louis Vuitton	Manager, Louis Vuitton Concept Store, Dover Street Market	Louis Vuitton Store Manager, Bond Street, London
16	R4	Luxury Retail	Selfridges	Senior Creative Manager, Research & Innovation, Selfridges	Artist, Radio Broadcaster, Consultant Creative Director
17	EC1	Independent Consultant	Metaphor Consultancy	Creative Director, Metaphor	Architect, Designer

3.2.2.4. Study Sample Size

It is acknowledged in the literature that whilst there are numerous studies concerning with the method of selecting interview participants, agreed guidelines for determining the appropriate sample sizes are “virtually non-existent” (Guest et al, 2006: p. 59). Guest et al (2006: p.61) provide an example of the different works that provide guidelines (e.g. Bernard (2000) states 36; Bertaux (1981) states a minimum of 15; Morse (1994) a minimum of 6 for phenomenological studies; Creswell (1998) between 5-25 for a phenomenological study), yet state that “none of them present evidence for their recommendations”. Marshall et al (2013: p. 12) concur with Guest et al (2006) that there is a recognised lack of standards with sample size and state that this may even act “as a barrier to many scholars considering qualitative research”, particularly in light of the focus on theoretical saturation as a criterion by which to

judge adequate sample sizes (e.g. Crouch and McKenzie, 2006; Guest et al, 2006). Crouch and McKenzie (2006) claim that there is a widely held view in the broader research community that the larger the sample size, the greater acceptability of the research as there is a better chance of theoretical saturation, described by Guest at al (2013: p. 59) as 'the point at which no or little new information is being extracted from the data is reached'. However, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) argue positively for small samples in interview-based qualitative research.

Describing a 'small sample' as less than 20 respondents, Crouch and McKenzie (2006: p. 493) claim that even the notion of 'sample' may be inappropriate as the respondents may not always be drawn by a target population, but rather as "variants of a particular social setting and of the experiences arising in it" who "embody and represent meaningful experience-structure links". The authors claim that respondents are engaged with their environments and therefore, interviewing a small number of respondents "is the way in which analytic, inductive, exploratory studies are best done" (Crouch and McKenzie, 2006: p.496). However, whilst it accepted that focusing on a small number of people it is possible to gain a deeper understanding of meanings from those who are actively engaged in the environment, it is suggested that this does not take into account that all studies are different. For example, samples may differ with regards to the degree of homogeneity or the complexity of the study may vary (Guest et al, 2013). In the case of this research, the expertise and knowledge of the respondents themselves, the organisations they are employed by are also critical to the validity of the sample population and research. Romney et al (1986) highlight this point by stating that small interview samples, with as few as four individuals, can explore and render rich, highly accurate and complete information within a cultural context, but that it depends on the degree of expertise regarding a domain of inquiry held by the respondents.

It is acknowledged that the sample population of this research is small with 17 senior professionals and practitioners. However, this reflects the interpretivist approach of the research and the research aim to conduct an in-depth exploration of the meaning of curation and its role in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment. The size of this sample population is justified in light of the senior professionals possession of breadth and depth of experience and expertise regarding the research topic, as argued by Romney et al (1986) and therefore, their ability to "represent meaningful experience-structure links", described by Crouch and McKenzie (2006). The adoption of in-depth interviews as a research technique supports this sampling strategy as it enables the exploration and the elicitation of a vivid picture through meanings ascribed to the research topic and the face-to-face, non-verbal behaviour observed. Moreover, it is suggested that the nature of the sample, which includes senior professionals and practitioners in two types of luxury retailers and various cultural institutions, may help to make the findings more transferable for subsequent studies.

3.2.3. Research Method - In-Depth Interviews

In light of the interpretative nature of this study, face-to-face, in-depth interviews were selected as the research qualitative method due to it offering the opportunity to conduct in-depth inquiry and exploration of the research topic with a number of professional respondents. The one-on-one interview format that looks and feels like a conversation and enables the researcher identify social clues (Opdenakker, 2006) and "to focus precisely on the content of the interviewee's responses, paying close attention to tone, content and body language" (Guest et al, 2013: p.113). Given that the research aim is to elicit and understand meanings attached to curation and its role in the design and development of brand experience, the interview method offers the opportunity to maximise reflexivity, develop a holistic perspective and focus on meaning and constructs (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Research techniques identified in the literature to best understand an undefined context are those that use a small sample of specialists or subject-matter experts in order to 'dive' deep to capture rich and relevant data (e.g. Saunders et al, 2012; Crouch and McKenzie, 2006; Guest et al, 2012), which each individual interview, as a unit of analysis and observation, enables (Bernard and Ryan, 2010). In addition, it is acknowledged in the literature that interviews enable the researcher to explore the phenomenon of curation in luxury retail in natural settings (e.g. Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Bernard and Ryan, 2010). Denzin and Lincoln (2005) claim that qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Therefore, by holding face-to-face interviews in the respondents' natural settings, where non-verbal behaviour can also be observed, this enabled the research to interpret the phenomena of curation in luxury retail, and the meanings the participants brought to them, in their natural context.

3.2.3.1. Interview Format and Questions

The interview format was designed for a minimum of 60 minutes and structured around 4 key steps, which are outlined below in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4: Five Semi-Structured Open Interview Questions and Structure of the Interview

Interview Steps	Estimated Duration	Agenda
Step 1	0-5 minutes	Introduction
Step 2	5-10 minutes	Summary explanation of the research objectives, data collection and analysis techniques
Step 3 Interview Question 1	10-15 minutes	First semi-structured interview question: How is curation and the role of the curator defined today ?
Interview Question 2	15-25 minutes	Does the curator or creative director impact or influence the design and development of brand experience of the luxury store/museum or gallery? If so, in what ways?
Interview Question 3	25-35 minutes	What are the key defining characteristics of the curation process in a luxury retail store environment or museum/gallery (as applicable)?
Interview Question 4	35-45 minutes	Do you believe that the process and activity of curation differs in the design and development of brand experience in a luxury retail store environment to that of a leading museum or gallery?
Interview Question 5	45-55 minutes	Can curators or creative directors learn from each other in the two different environments?
Step 4	55-60 minutes	Wrap up of the interview

The objectives of the interview-based data collection were based on the three research questions. Five semi-structured interview questions were developed to investigate and understand perceptions regarding the following:

1. Perceptions of what is curation and what is the role of the curator today

2. Beliefs about whether the curator (or creative director or other) impacts or influences the design and development of brand experience of the luxury retail store or museum or gallery

3. Beliefs about what the key characteristics of the process of curation in a luxury retail store or a museum/gallery are

4. Perceptions of whether the process and activity of curation differs in the luxury retail store environment to that of a leading museum or gallery

5. Perceptions of whether curators in museums/galleries or creative directors in luxury retail

are able to learn from each other in the two different environments

The five questions were asked in the same order in every interview in order to facilitate comparability, therefore the interview questions acted as a sequential interview guide.

The order of the questions commenced with a broader, open question that was easy to understand and helped to mediate the exploration of the subject matter. The openness of the question also helped to establish the interviewees understanding of curation and identify prevailing perspectives, interpretations, knowledge and expertise regarding the topic of curation. This was an important first question as it helped the interviewee paint a picture at the outset to which she or he could then go back and refer to when providing examples, or reflect and modify when answering the following questions and developing a train of thought. It also served as a useful reference point to support transitional explanations between questions where required.

Following the initial first open question, the subsequent questions focused on the roles and process of curation which enabled the interviewees to provide examples, references and stories. Two questions were asked that related to comparing the luxury retail and cultural environments towards the end of the interview. The timing of these questions were intentionally towards the end of the interview, and after the questions regarding the process and roles, in order to provide the interviewee with the opportunity to reflect more deeply through comparison and again, modify or cement previously stated thoughts and considerations.

Whilst it was expected that some interviewees would wish to spend longer on a particular question or have more insights or experience to drawn upon regarding a specific area, the existence of the five semi-structured questions served as a useful guidepost when to exercise discretion or when to draw the interviewee back to the questions.

Table 3.5 highlights the word count and recorded minutes per interview for each of the 17 participants.

Table 3.5: Interview Transcript Word Counts/Recorded Minutes Per Participant

Participant	Reference Code	Type of Industry	Transcript Word Count and Recorded Minutes
1	C1	Cultural Institution	16,284 (120 minutes)
2	G2	Cultural Institution	5,819 (70 minutes)
3	RC2	Cultural Institution	8,388 (67 minutes)
4	RC1	Cultural Institution	8,527 (62 minutes)
5	R2	Luxury Retail	5,832 (65 minutes)
6	C3	Cultural Institution	7,279 (61 minutes)
7	R7	Luxury Retail/ Cultural Institution	5,447 (63 minutes)
8	C2	Cultural Institution	7,342 (60 minutes)
9	R6	Luxury Retail	12,844 (76 minutes)
10	R1	Luxury Retail	10,406 (62 minutes)
11	G1	Cultural Institution	9,881 (64 minutes)
12	R5	Luxury Retail	4,747 (61 minutes)
13	C5	Cultural Institution	8,542 (67 minutes)
14	C4	Independent Consultant	8,693 (61 minutes)
15	R3	Luxury Retail	6,479 (63 minutes)
16	R4	Luxury Retail	11,565 (65 minutes)
17	EC1	Independent Consultant	13, 172 (84 minutes)

4. Data Collection and Analysis

4.1. Data Collection

As outlined in Chapter 3.2.3.1, the data collection focused on five key semi-structured questions, which were discussed with the 17 interview participants over a period of 1-2 hours. Initial contact was made by email, which outlined the nature of the project and the contribution towards the research that was felt the individual could make. The email also made it clear that the interview would be recorded and the material gathered would be confidential. All interviewee participants expressed their interest and pleasure in contributing as they found the subject matter fascinating. Interviews were held at the interview participants respective places of work, or locations close to their places of work.

In accordance with the University of Manchester Ethical guidelines, all interviewees read the information sheets provided and completed the official consent forms that acknowledges the information provided would be recorded for the purpose of the research.

The interviews were recorded by an iPad and then uploaded and sent to Stirling Transcription Services for transcription. Within three weeks all of the interview transcripts were emailed in Word format as well as individual audio files.

Notes taken during the interviews were attached to each of the transcript Word files. This was for ease of reference when checking the audio files and re-reading the transcripts to ensure the data was correctly heard and transcribed. It also helped to minimise any opportunity for any key points, for example, non-verbal behaviour observations, not to have been identified.

4.2. Data Analysis

This research focus acknowledges Alvesson and Deetz's (2000, p.1.) suggestion that "Qualitative research has become associated with many different theoretical perspectives, but it is typically oriented to the inductive study of socially constructed reality, focusing on meanings, ideas and practices, taking the native's point of view seriously". Recognition of the diversity of perspectives is a distinct shift away from the adoption of a positivist paradigm, found commonly in quantitative research, where replicability and generalisabiity is deemed as critical (Sandberg, 2000). Attempts at the provision of alternative qualitative research criteria have been acknowledged in the literature (e.g. Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yardley, 2000).

This research has adopted the Thematic Analysis approach for the purpose of this research

and identification of themes, as it is critical to apply a transparent method to present the data and the demonstrate the structure and foundations of the data analysis and interpretation (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic Analysis is the most commonly used method of analysis in qualitative research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon, following a process of considered reading and re-reading of the data to recognize patterns (e.g. Daly et al, 1997; Rice and Ezzy, 1999; Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

However, despite being widely used in qualitative analysis, there appears to be no clear agreement of what and how a researcher should apply Thematic Analysis (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Boyatzis, 1998; Tuckett, 2005). Consequently, Thematic Analysis has been critiqued in the literature due to the absence of clear and concise criteria and guidelines (Braun and Clarke, 2006).

However, Boyatzis (1998) suggests that Thematic Analysis is not just a method, but a tool that can be deployed across other qualitative methods, as it is an accessible and theoretically flexible approach to search for themes and patterns. It is acknowledged that there are other research methods and criteria that seek to identify and highlight patterns, for example, Grounded Theory and Discourse Analysis. However, they have not been selected for the purpose of this research report as they are theoretically bounded and linked to specific epistemological perspectives (e.g. McLeod, 2001; Smith and Osbourn, 2003).

Transparency of thematic analysis is important in order to demonstrate the active role of the researcher and therefore avoid any doubt that themes have not simply arisen from the data in a passive way, which could risk the research being perceived as naïve and not thorough (Ely et al, 1997). For this reason, this research seeks to clarify the process of analysis at each stage in order to provide a clear trail of evidence for the credibility and validity of the study.

4.2.1. Stages of the Analysis

As outlined previously, all interviews were recorded and transcribed for analysis.[20] To provide a clear trail of evidence for the credibility of the study and to support the Thematic Analysis method adopted, the analytical approach followed the methodology and conventions of thematic analysis (TA), in particular, referencing Braun & Clarke's (2006) Six Stages of Analysis Framework, as outlined below in Figure 4.1:

[20] Please see Appendix 4 for an example of an interview transcript

Figure 4.1: Stages and Process involved in Qualitative Analysis - Adapted from Braun and Clarke (2006) - Six Stages of Analysis

Analytical Process	Practical Application in NVivo	Strategic Objective	Iterative Process Throughout Analysis
1. Familiarising yourself with the data	Phase 1 1. Transcribing data if necessary, reading and re-reading the data, noting down initial ideas 2. Import data into the NVivo data management tool	Data Management Open and Hierarchical Coding Through NVivo	Assigning data to refined concepts to portray meaning
2. Generating Initial Codes	Phase 2 Open Coding 1. Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set 2. Collecting data relevant to each code		Refining and distilling more abstract concepts
3. Searching for Themes	Phase 3 Categorisation of Codes 1. Collating codes into potential themes 2. Gathering all data relevant to each potential theme	Descriptive Accounts Reordering Coding on and annotating through NVivo	
4. Reviewing Themes	Phase 4 Coding On 1. Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2) 2. Generating a thematic map of the analysis		Assigning data to themes/concepts to portray meaning
5. Defining and Naming Themes	Phase 5 - Data Reduction 1. Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme and the overall story (storylines) the analysis tells 2. Generating clear definitions and names for each theme	Explanatory Accounts 1. Extrapolating deeper meaning 2. Drafting summary statements and analytical memos through NVivo	Assigning Meaning Generating Themes and Concepts
6. Producing the Report	Phase 6 - Generating Analytical Memos Phase 7 – Testing and Validating Phase 8 – Synthesising Analytical Memos The final opportunity for analysis Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples Final analysis of selected extracts relating analysis to the research question/literature Producing a scholarly report of the analysis		

The qualitative data analysis package NVivo was deployed to support the six phases of the Braun & Clarke (2006) framework in order to support the stages of coding, theme review and refinement and development of analysis, through linkage of memos and annotations to coded text. It is important to point out that this software is a support tool only and therefore does not or cannot provide the required level of academic interpretation that a researcher must

undertake (Cassell and Symon, 2004).

The adoption of the Braun and Clarke (2006) "Six Stages of Analysis" supported the identification of codes, themes and organization of findings. A summary is highlighted in Table 4.1, with the explanation below of each stage.

Table 4.1: Summary of Data Analysis from Phase 1 to Phase 6 of Braun and Clarke's (2006) "Six Stages of Analysis"

Braun & Clarke's (2006) Six Stages of Analysis	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3	Phase 4	Phase 5	Phase 6
Objective	Importing transcripts into NVivo Immersion into the data No Coding	Generating initial codes Open coding in a systematic fashion across the entire data set	Searching for Themes Seeking Patterns Categorising Codes	Reviewing Themes Generating a thematic map and Phase 4 Code Book	Defining and Naming Themes	Producing the Report Validating Themes
Output	Thorough understanding of the data	24 main codes and 372 sub-codes, total of 396 codes	Organisation of Phase 2 codes into 1st and 2nd and 3rd Tier codes. 1st tier codes represent "parent" codes, 2nd tier codes represent "child" codes 20 Parent codes identified and 102 2nd Tier codes	Refinement of Phase 3 codes into a total of 15 codes in Phase 4, consisting of: 11 Primary Codes and 4 Sub-codes	Review of Phase 4 Codebook and Conceptual Map into 9 Themes and Refined Thematic Map	Drawing on the Phase 5 9 Themes, identification of 7 key curatorial practices which constitute 4 types of curation in the luxury retail environment
Refinement	Non Applicable	Non Applicable	Reduction of Phase 2 total of 396 codes to 20 parent codes and 102 tier 2 sub-codes	Reduction of Phase 3 total of 122 codes to 11 Primary Categories and 4 Sub-Categories	Transformation from Phase 4 11 Primary Codes and 4 Sub Codes to 9 Themes in Phase 5	From 7 curatorial practices to 4 key forms of curation in the luxury retail environment

Phase 1 – Familiarisation with the Data

The first analytical stage objective is immersion into the data and therefore focused on a thorough initial reading of the data in the transcripts. A second and third active re-reading, looking for meanings and patterns, enabled the initiation of notes and memos, written manually to start with, as notes in preparation for the creation of nodes in NVivo. This stage also included reverting back to both the audio files and the notes written during the interview, in order to check for accuracy, consistency and reliability of transcription.

Phase 2 – Generating Initial Codes

The first part of Phase 2 referred to coding which meant reading the transcripts in detail again in an active manner and highlighting any passages of text that were identified as relevant to the research questions. Boyatzis (1998: p.31) suggests that codes "capture the qualitative

richness of the phenomenon" and are the most basic segment or element of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon. Bernard (2011, p.338) states that analysis is the "search for patterns in data and for ideas that help explain why those patterns are there in the first place". Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest that it is important to code as many potential themes and patterns as possible as the researcher never knows what may be interesting at a later stage.

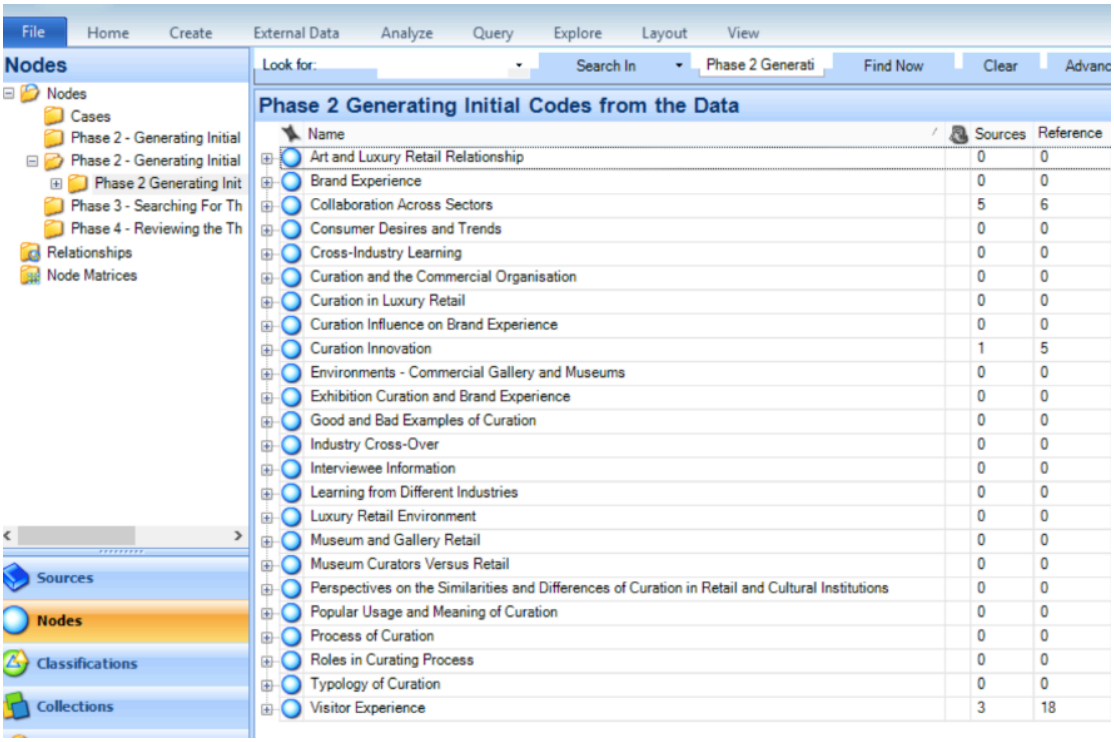
It is important to note that the process of coding is influenced by personal filters regarding perception, documentation and coding data (Saldana, 2013). The process involves classification reasoning, plus personal tacit knowledge and intuition to determine what the data looks and feels alike when grouping together (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Therefore, how one researcher will interpret a passage of text may be entirely different to another. What is important is to identify the research approach and epistemological stance taken from the outset, in order to clarify the lens or filter that will be applied in response to the data (Saldana, 2013).

The coding approach adopted for the analysis of the 17 transcripts is referred to in the literature as theoretical thematic analysis as it is driven by the researcher's analytical interest in the area of focus (Braun and Clarke, 2006). This differs from an inductive thematic analytical approach, which resembles Grounded Theory, in such that the data is coded without being driven by the researcher, trying to fit in a pre-existing coding framework or influenced by any research pre-conceptions (Frith and Gleeson, 2004).

Once text passages were identified as relevant to the research questions and area of research interest, a "bucket" was created. The NVivo "nodes" may be described as buckets or containers for the identified various different initial themes and the consequent placement of pertinent data excerpts relating to those initial themes identified in the data. A title or heading was given to each individual node and all passages of text identified as relevant to the node were cut, pasted and stored under the specific node title or heading.

The original number of nodes in Phase 2 of the process of coding for the two transcripts totaled 24. The total of sub-nodes within these 24 main nodes totaled 372, therefore, the total of nodes and sub-nodes together totaled 396. A high-level description was written to define the node title for purposes of clarification, transparency and tracking purposes. The number of 24 initial codes is recognized as being appropriate as MacQueen et al (2009: p.218) observe that "for the most part, coders can only handle 30-40 codes at one time for a study". However, due to the considerable number of total nodes, 396, it was recognized that Phase 3 and 4 would require considerable refinement of this number. The NVivo file can be seen in Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: Screenshot of the NVivo File at Phase 2 – Generating Initial codes



Phase 3 – Searching for Themes

Following the development of the initial 24 nodes and high-level descriptions for each of the 24 nodes, the next step in the Braun and Clarke's (2006) process was Phase 3, which involved searching for patterns or themes.

Regarding the search for patterns and themes, Saldana (2013) states that both the search for patterns and the process of reaching theory is complex and messy than some espoused thematic analysis linear processes appear. However, Richards and Morse (2007) claim that categorizing is a way in which it is possible to address the complexity and how we move form the diversity of data to more structured shapes of the data, of things represented.

A third, fourth and fifth reading of the data resulted in a review of the existing nodes and refinement into categories. Refinement of the codes into categories was based on Hatch's (2002) suggestion that categories, patterns or themes may be characterized by:

- Similarity (things happen the same way)

- Difference (they happen in predictably different ways)

- Frequency (they happen seldom or often)

- Correspondence (they happen in relation to other activities or events)

- Causation (one appears to cause another)

In Phase 3, following in particular Hatch's (2002) "causation" characteristic, nodes were structured into "parent" nodes and "child" nodes or 1st, 2nd and even 3rd tier node categories.

Some nodes were discarded as not deemed valuable or relevant to the focus of the research, for example "Interviewee Information" and "Curation Innovation" were removed. "Interviewee Information" was identified as information relating to the interviewee's professional background that could be placed in the Appendices as not core to the data. "Curation Innovation" was eliminated and its only one sub-node. "Museum Curators of the Future", was moved to "Typology of Curation" as it described the traits of a museum curator. In addition, some parent nodes were collapsed into a single node, for example, "Learning from Different Industries" was merged with "Cross Industry Learning" in line with Hatch's (2002) characteristic of "similarity". This refinement resulted in a new total of 20 parent nodes, a reduction of 4 from the previous Phase 2.

At the end of Phase 3, using NVivo software, the new and refined structure was developed which included Parent Nodes and Child Tier 2 and 3 Sub-nodes, representing Phase 3.

Phase 4 – Reviewing the Themes

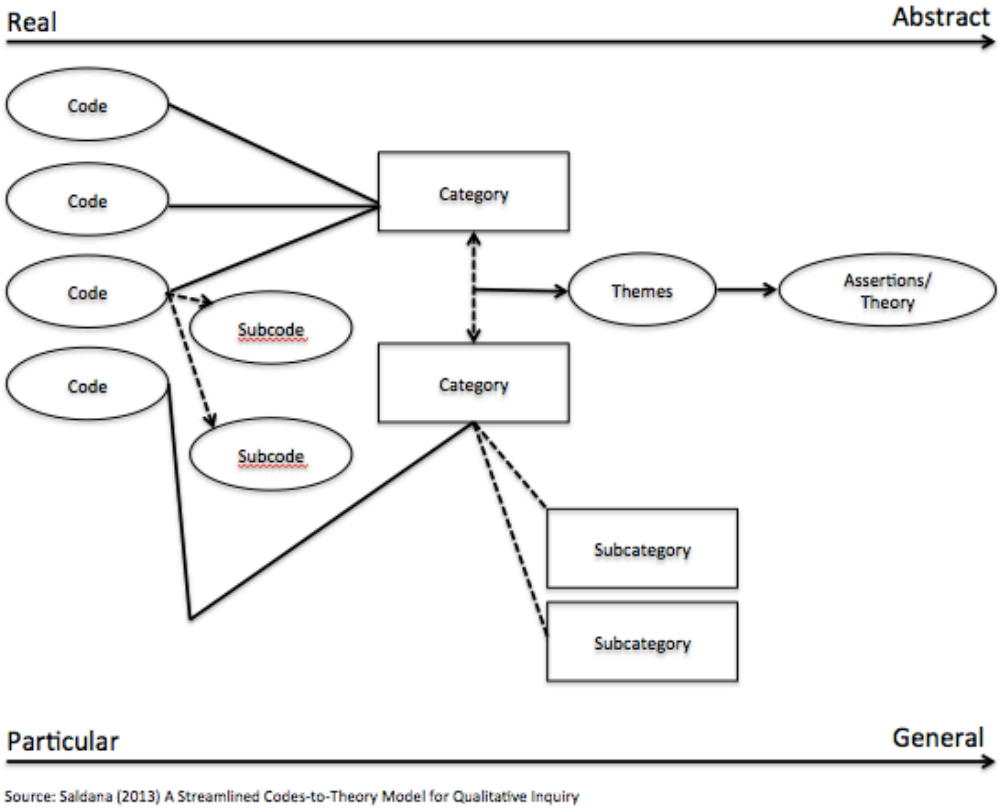
Following the refinement of the nodes into categories and sub-categories in Phase 3, the coding and analysis was progressed further to Phase 4 by adopting Saldana's (2013) Code to Category to Theme model.

The rationale of using this model was the recognition that "some categories may contain coded data that merit further refinement...and when the major categories are compared with each other and consolidated in various ways, you begin to transcend the "reality" of your data and progress towards the thematic, conceptual and theoretical" (Saldana, 2013: p.12)

Rossman and Rallis (2003, p. 282) use the following example to illustrate the difference between a category and a theme as: "think of a category as a word or phrase describing some segment of your data that is explicit, whereas a theme is a phrase of sentence describing more subtle and tacit processes".

Saldana's (2013) model can be observed below in Figure 4.3:

Figure 4.3: Saldana's (2013) From Code to Category to Theme Model for Qualitative Inquiry



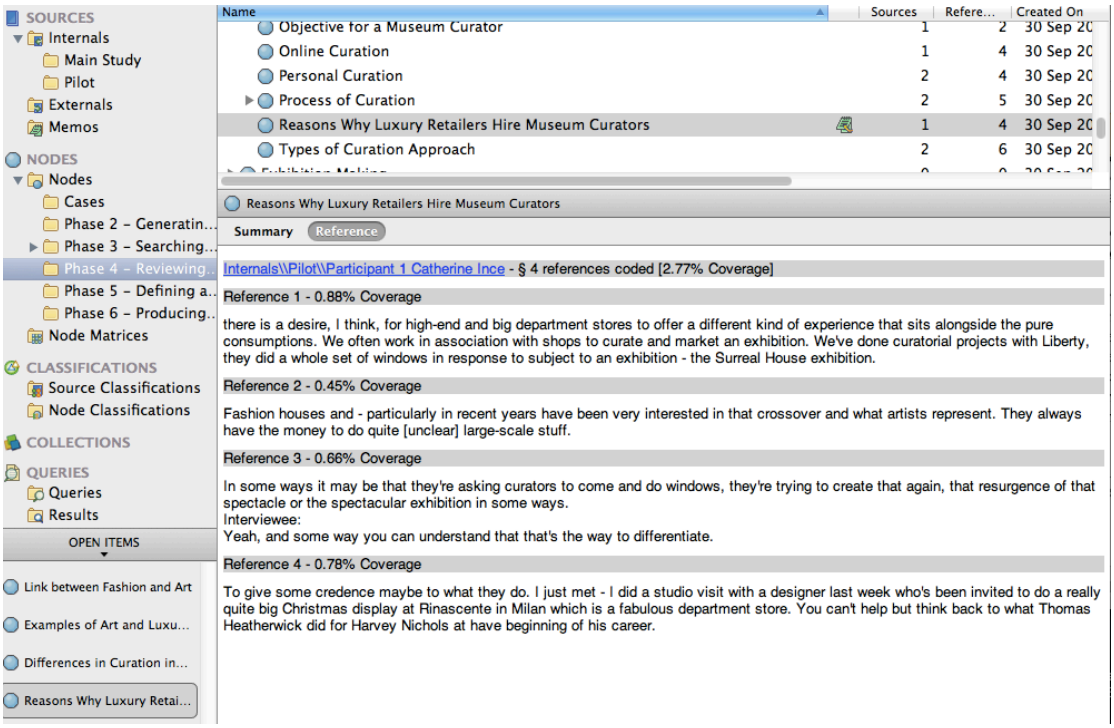
Source: Saldana (2013) A Streamlined Codes-to-Theory Model for Qualitative Inquiry

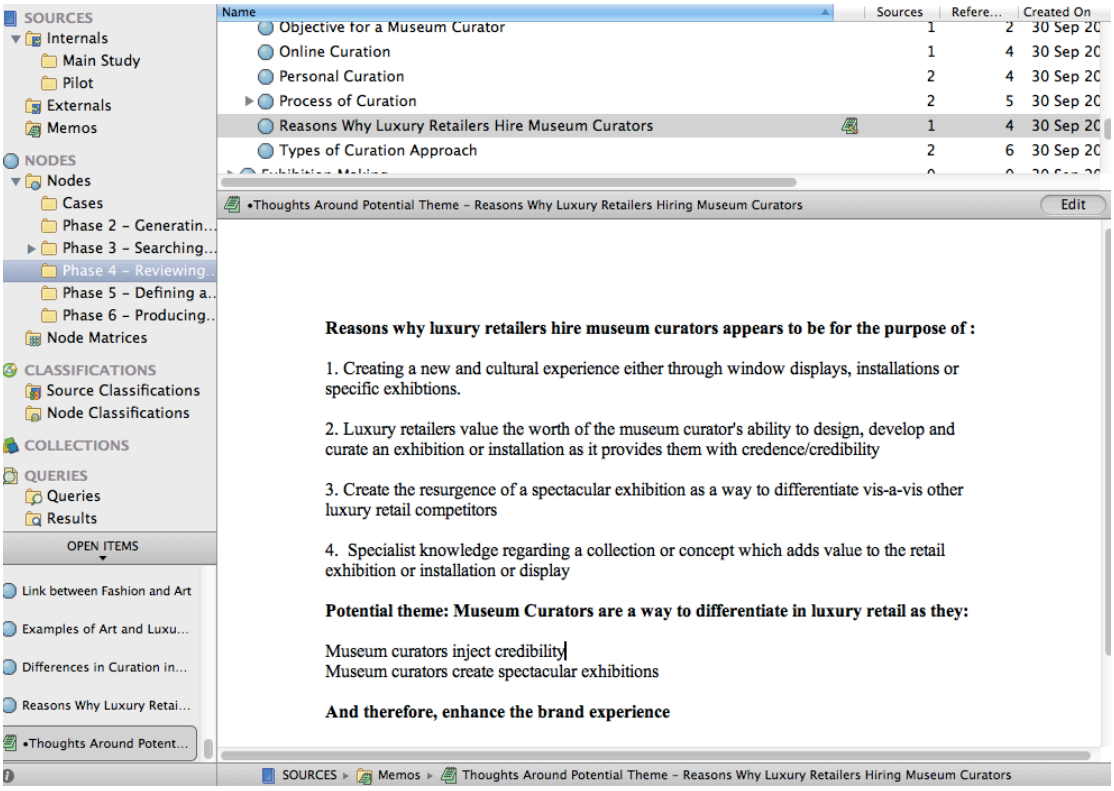
An example of how Saldana's (2013) framework was adopted and applied, can be seen by taking the example of the category:

"Reasons Why Luxury Retailers Hire Museum Curators".

This refinement started with the re-reading of the coded text and annotations to developing a described category, as seen in Figure 4.4 below:

Figure 4.4: Capturing of Ideas and Thoughts Around Potential Themes During the Reading Process





The potential theme identified from this category, consisting of four different references, is that "*the employment of museum curators is a way for luxury retailers to enhance the brand*

experience and thus, differentiate themselves" for a number of reasons, including:

- Credence / Credibility (skills, experience in developing concepts, displays, exhibitions or installations)

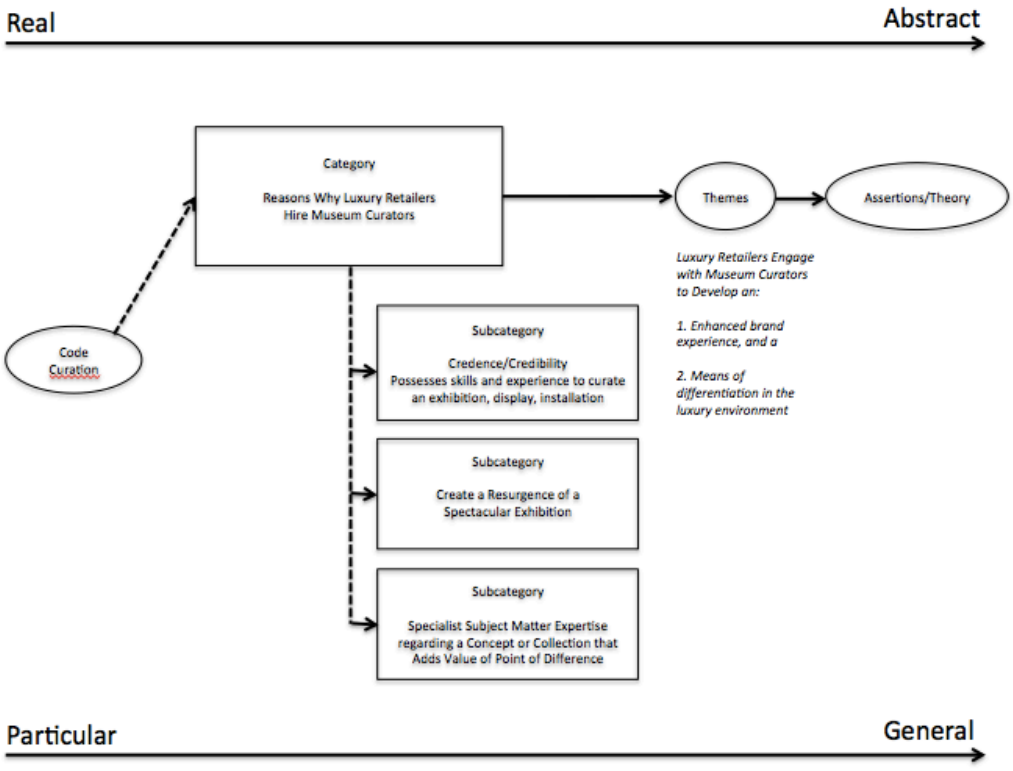
- Ability to create and curate a spectacular, sensory exhibition (along the lines of previous grand old department stores which had developed the art of display from big, cultural institutions for which curators were responsible) that would serve to differentiate against both other bricks and mortar luxury retail stores but also online luxury retail propositions

- Specialist subject matter expertise (regarding a research topic, collection or concept which adds value to the retail exhibition or installation or display)

- Linkage to the zeitgeist or wider cultural interest of phenomena that is being shown in the curator's cultural institution in order to support and enhance brand positioning of the luxury retailers as being innovative or disruptive, or just different from other luxury retailer propositions

Figure 4.5 highlights an example of how this model was applied:

Figure 4.5: Example of Adoption of Saldana's (2013) "From Code to Category to Theme Model"



A thorough review of the Phase 3 codebook and all of the annotations took place.

The annotations consisted of the following one, if not all, of the following details:

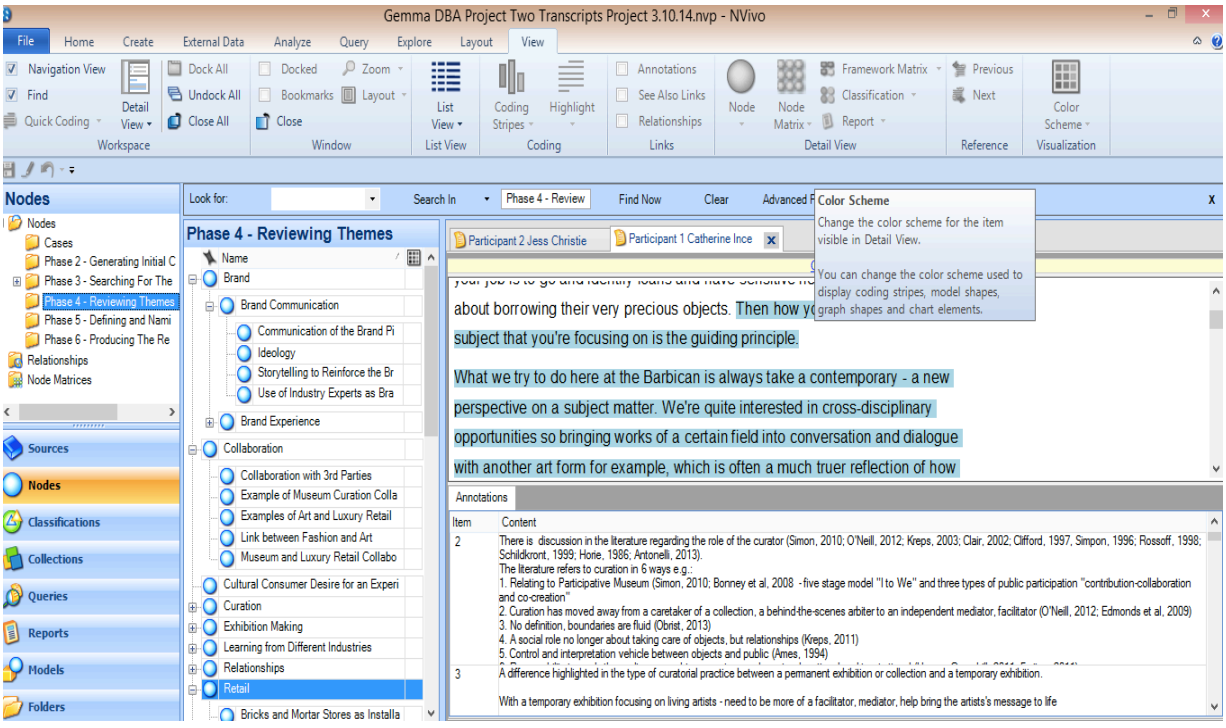
1. Personal thought and commentary

2. Link to the literature e.g. reference to a school of thought or theoretical discussion and specific authors who are included in the literature review

3. A new question to be asked or investigated

Figure 4.6 below shows an overview of how the refinement included each code, category, description and annotation.

Figure 4.6: Screenshot of the working screen in NVivo when refining each category and supporting annotation and memo:



As a result of this review, a refined Phase 4 codebook was developed around categories and potential themes.

To support this process, all of the Phase 3 coded references were lifted out of NVivo into an excel spreadsheet and re-read manually to double check and help identify the main categories or primary categories, sub-categories and potential themes.

Utilising Saldana's (2013) model, parent nodes were observed to be "primary categories",

which reduced from 20 in Phase 3 to a new total of 7. 11 “sub-categories” were identified as supporting these primary categories. One Phase 3 parent node was merged into a primary category and one Phase 3 parent node, “Cross-Industry Learning” was identified both as a sub-category and also an opportunity for future research. One parent node, “Gallery and Museum Retail” was identified as an opportunity for future research and removed. Table 4.2 outlines the refinement from Phase 3 into Phase 4.

Table 4.2: Refinement of Phase 3 Parent Nodes into Phase 4 Primary Categories and Sub-Categories

Phase 3 Codebook	Name of Parent Node	Summary of Node	Category Type and Status	Phase 4 Codes
1	Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Retail Brand Experience	Art Deployed In Various Ways As a Strategic Tool or Differentiation Strategy by Luxury Retailers	Identified as a "Key Influence on Brand Experience and Luxury Retail Environment" Revised title	Primary Category titled "Art and Luxury Relationship"
2	Brand Experience	Brand Experience As a Critical Element of the Luxury Retailer Strategy	Primary Category Revised Title	Primary Category titled "Design and Development of Brand Experience"
3	Collaboration Across Sectors	Transfer of Curatorial Skills and Expertise To Strengthen Brand Experience in Luxury Retail	Identified as a "Key Influence on Brand Experience"	Primary Category
4	Consumer Desires and Trends	Observation of What Today's Luxury Customer is Seeking	Primary Category	Primary Category
5	Cross-Industry Learning	Observed Opportunities Where the Cultural Institution and Luxury Retail Learn From Each Other	Removed as merged with Industry Cross-Over Also Identified as an "Area of Future Research Opportunity"	Removed as merged with Industry Cross-Over
6	Curation and the Commercial Organisation	Examples of How Curatorial Practice Influences the Retail Organisation	Identified as linking to Industry Cross-Over and also Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience	Sub Category Code
7	Curation in Luxury Retail	Examples of How Curation and Curatorial Practices Manifest Themselves in Luxury Retail	Primary Category	Primary Category
8	Curation Influence on Brand Experience	Examples on How Curation Influences the Design and Development of Brand Experience	Primary Category	Primary Category
9	Environments – Commercial Gallery and Museums	Observations on the Characteristics of the two Cultural Environments	Identified as a "Key Influence on Curatorial Practices Today" Sub-Category to Typology of Curation	Removed as merged with Typology of Curation
10	Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience	Observations on the Different Type of Curatorial Practices Regarding Temporary Exhibitions	Primary Category	Primary Category
11	Good and Bad Examples of Curation	Commentary on Examples of Well-Perceived Curation and Less Well-Perceived Curation	Identified as a Sub-Category in the Process of Curation	Removed as merged with Process of Curation
12	Industry Cross-Over	Observations Regarding How Elements of Luxury Retail Strategy are Found in Cultural Institutions and Vice Versa	Identified as a Sub-Category to Collaboration Across Sectors	Sub-Category Code
13	Luxury Retail Environment	Commentary and Observation Regarding Types of Luxury Retail Environments the Customers, as Exhibition Spaces and Display Opportunities for Online	Primary Category	Primary Category
14	Museum and Gallery Retail	Observation Regarding Retail Practices in Museums and Galleries	Contextual Information Only Node Removed Identified as an Opportunity for Future Research	Removed
15	Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions	Commentary and Observation Regarding Similarities and Differences in Both Environments Regarding Curatorial Practices	Primary Category	Primary Category
16	Popular Usage and Meaning of Curation	Commentary and Observation Regarding Perceptions, Beliefs and Interpretations of What Curation Is and Means Today	Identified as a Sub Category of	Sub Category Code
17	Process of Curation	Commentary and Observation Regarding Challenges, Different Processes of Curatorial Practices	Identified as a Sub Category of Typology of Curation and linked to Roles of Curation	Sub Category Code
18	Roles in the Curating Process	Observation Regarding the Different Roles People Play in the Process of Curation	Primary Category	Primary Category Code
19	Typology of Curation	Commentary and Observation Regarding Different Types and Faces of Curation Today	Primary Category	Primary Category Code
20	Visitor Experience	Observation Regarding Experiences inside a Cultural Institution e.g. Museum or Gallery	Contextual Information Only Node Removed Identified as an Opportunity for Future Research	Removed

Table 4.3 highlights the refined Phase 4 Codebook that consists of a total of 15 codes:

Table 4.3: Phase 4 Codebook

Category No	Primary Category (11)	Linked to
1	Art and Luxury Relationship	• Consumer Desires and Trends (Primary Category) • Luxury Retail Environment (Primary)
2	Design and Development of Brand Experience	None
3	Collaboration Across Sectors	• Industry Cross-Over (Sub Category) • Luxury Retail Environment (Primary Category)
4	Curation in Luxury Retail	None
5	Curation Influence on Brand Experience	None
6	Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience	• Curation and Commercial Organisation (Sub Category) • Typology of Curation (Primary Category)
7	Luxury Retail Environment	• Collaboration Across Sectors (Primary Category) • Typology of Curation (Primary Category
8	Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions	• Industry Cross-Over (Sub Category)
9	Roles in Curating Process	• Process of Curation (Sub Category) • Typology of Curation (Primary Category)
10	Typology of Curation	• Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience (Primary Category) • Process of Curation (Sub Category) • Roles of Curation (Sub Category) • Popular Usage and Meaning of Curation (Primary Category)
11	Consumer Desires and Trends	• Art and Luxury Relationship (Primary Category) • Luxury Retail Environment (Primary Category)
Category No	**Sub Category (4)**	**Linked to**
12	Industry Cross-Over	• Collaboration Across Sectors (Primary Category) • Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions (Primary Category) • Curation Influence on Brand Experience (Primary Category)
13	Curation and Commercial Organisation	• Industry Cross-Over (Sub Category) • Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience (Primary Category)
14	Popular Usage and Meaning of Curation	• Typology of Curation (Primary Category)
15	Process of Curation	• Roles of Curation (Primary Category) • Typology of Curation (Primary Category)

Once the categories were identified, Bazeley's (2009) 3-step model was reviewed in order to develop the themes and make sense of them in order to support the process of further refinement.

This model approach was adopted with the objective that the analysis should be based upon an integrating idea, with arguments to support it drawn from across the completed analyses (Bazeley, 2009).

In addition, by following this structured approach, it is suggested that it can support the quality of the analysis through three key ways:

1. Creating and using displays from the data in order to identify patterns of association (how often things vary) and the nature of the associations (in what ways something might vary). Examples of these displays are matrix displays developed through word frequency software in NVivo or typologies and conceptual mapping (Bazeley, 2009).

2. Identification of divergent views or outliers, which can provide a rich source of further analytic thinking (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

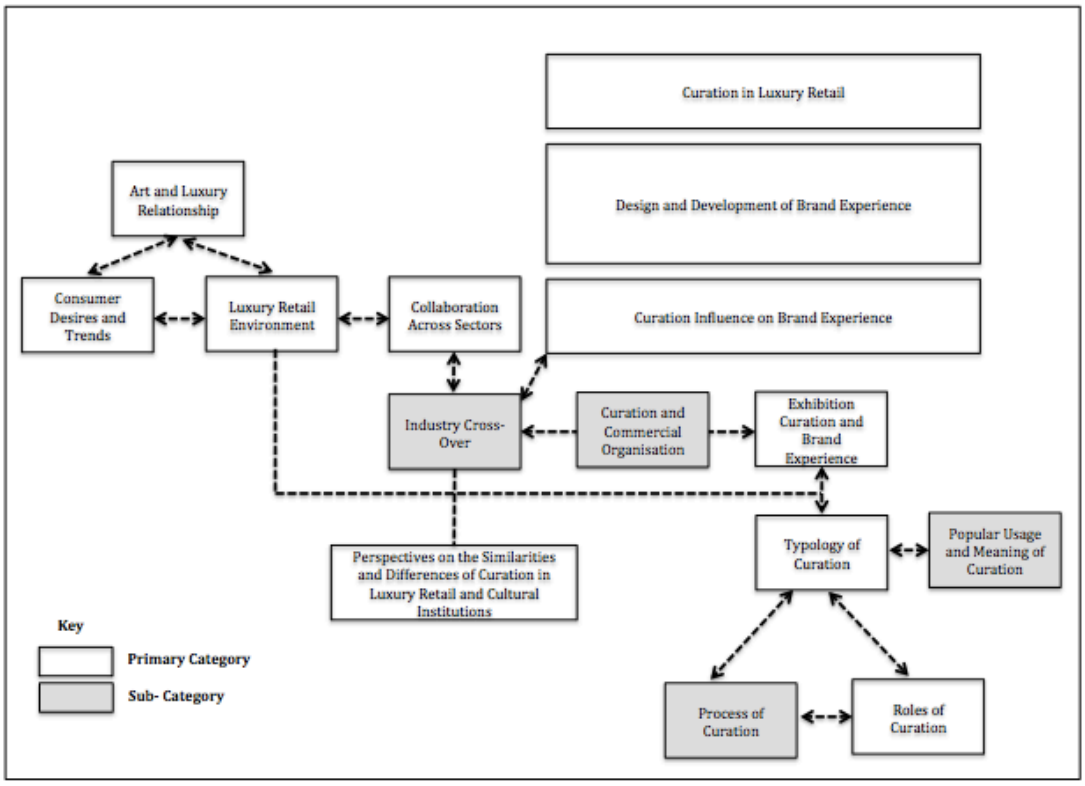
3. Connection to the theoretical literature in a timely fashion in order to avoid themes becoming only descriptive and disjointed observations (Bazeley, 2009). The Bazeley (2009) 3-step model may be observed in Table 4.4 below.

Table 4.4: Bazeley (2009) Three-Step Model "Describe – Compare – Relate"

Step	Rationale	Process	Examples
Describe	Describing is an important starting point	Once the demographic features of the sample and the interrelationships have been provided to enable further analyses, move to the first category or theme. Describe and record its characteristics and boundaries	How did people talk about this aspect? How many people talked about it? What was not included?
Compare	Comparing is required to identify and record meaningful associations and therefore prompt further questions or identify an absence of an association	Compare differences in the characteristics and boundaries for just that category or theme across contrasting demographic groups or across variations in context	Do themes occur more or less frequently for different groups? Are they expressed differently by different groups? Ask questions of your data about this category or theme – who, why, what, when?
Relate	Relate the theme or category to others already written about e.g. the literature review	Ask more questions e.g. does it make a difference if? Record the questions you ask and results you find or don't find Link the related themes into a visual image or map	Under what conditions does this category or theme arise? What actions, interactions or strategies are involved? What are the consequences and do these vary depending on the particular circumstances or the form in which it is expressed?

The first step of “Describe” was to develop a conceptual map of the key categories and themes generated to date, in order to identify how people spoke about the themes and identify if there were any patterns of association. Figure 4.7 outlines the conceptual map.

Figure 4.7: Conceptual Map of the Phase 4 Categories



The conceptual map was designed as a first reference point of the refined categories, sub-categories from the original nodes and multi-tiered child nodes. It was developed by using a rigorous, highly iterative bottom-up analysis of all of the coded references and the annotations. It is wholly based on interpretation of the Phase 4 data alone, the categories and sub-categories and themes identified. It is important to note that it was not influenced by, or refers to, any type of literature at this stage.

The purpose of the conceptual map at this stage is two-fold. Firstly, to highlight the relationships between the categories and the sub-categories that have, to date, been identified in the data through the Braun and Clark (2006) phased methodology of refinement. Both the nature of the layout of the map and the existence and direction of the multiple arrow linkages of the map indicate how categories, subcategories and themes have been interpreted to link together. It is important to point out that the map reflects the interpretation

at this stage of the Braun and Clarke's (2006) "Six Stages of Analysis" only and is not suggesting that this is the final answer.

Secondly, to demonstrate the process of how the data has been structured to generate the 15 categories in the Phase 4 of Phase of Braun and Clark's (2006) Six Stage Model. The process of refinement of the codes has been based on continually re-reading of the data by node, sub-node, reverting back to the entire interviewee data, the written notes, the audio file itself in order to check and verify meaning and focus on narrowing down on the core themes from the large and rich data set.

4.2.2. Development of Themes for Discussion

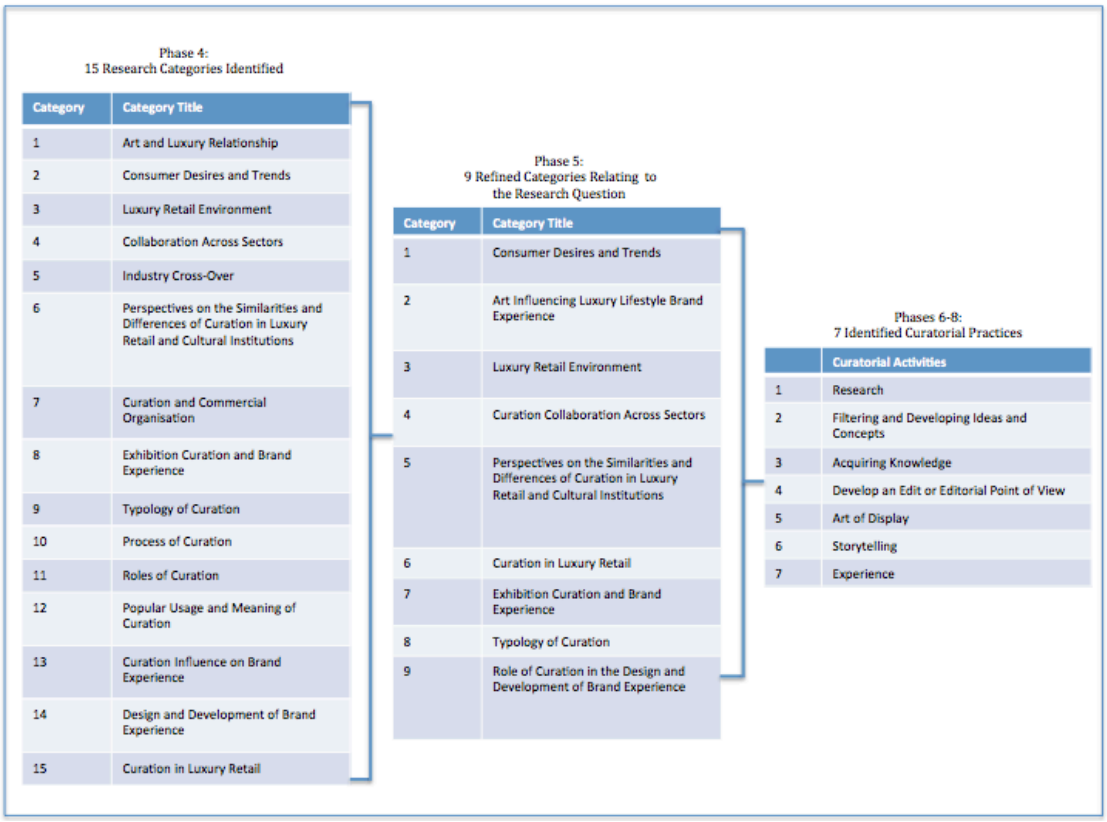
The next stage of the analysis was to explore in full the 15 identified categories. A final refinement of the 15 categories took place, through further examination of the categories and themes, which included the further merging of some of the categories and themes, and consequently, resulted in the transformation from categories to a reduced total of 9 themes:

1. Consumer Desires and Trends
2. Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Retail Brand Experience
3. Luxury Retail Environment
4. Curation Collaboration Across Sectors
5. Perspectives on Differences and Similarities of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions
6. Curation in Luxury Retail
7. Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience
8. Typology of Curation
9. Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience

The nine themes are fully explored in the findings and discussion chapters. The generation of 9 key themes that relate directly to the research question, resulted in 7 key curatorial activities being identified with the support of NVivo classification.[21] The reduction from 15 to 9 categories and then generation of 7 core curatorial activities was through a dual strategy of NVivo and manual analysis. Figure 4.8 highlights how the analysis originated from 15 coded categories to the 9 core themes and the 7 identified curatorial practices:

[21] Please see Appendix 5 for an overview of the seven curatorial activities

Figure 4.8: Overview of Data Analysis using Thematic Analysis – Stages 4-8 Braun and Clarke (2006) "Six Stages of Analysis"



Phase 4:
15 Research Categories Identified

Category	Category Title
1	Art and Luxury Relationship
2	Consumer Desires and Trends
3	Luxury Retail Environment
4	Collaboration Across Sectors
5	Industry Cross-Over
6	Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions
7	Curation and Commercial Organisation
8	Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience
9	Typology of Curation
10	Process of Curation
11	Roles of Curation
12	Popular Usage and Meaning of Curation
13	Curation Influence on Brand Experience
14	Design and Development of Brand Experience
15	Curation in Luxury Retail

Phase 5:
9 Refined Categories Relating to the Research Question

Category	Category Title
1	Consumer Desires and Trends
2	Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Brand Experience
3	Luxury Retail Environment
4	Curation Collaboration Across Sectors
5	Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions
6	Curation in Luxury Retail
7	Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience
8	Typology of Curation
9	Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience

Phases 6-8:
7 Identified Curatorial Practices

	Curatorial Activities
1	Research
2	Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts
3	Acquiring Knowledge
4	Develop an Edit or Editorial Point of View
5	Art of Display
6	Storytelling
7	Experience

4.2.3. Ensuring Reliability, Validity and Objectivity

Whilst it is acknowledged in the literature that qualitative research and data, like quantitative research, must be undertaken in a transparent, objective and rigorous manner, it is debated in the literature (e.g. Miles and Huberman, 1994; Saunders et al, 2012; Kelle and Laurie, 1995) that the terms “validity” and “reliability” may be inappropriate in the context of qualitative research, and other terms, such as “rigorousness”, “quality” and “trustworthiness” may be more appropriate.

The application of software in the data analysis process, such as NVivo, has been positioned to add transparency and rigour and remove the stigma of impression analysis (e.g. Braun and Clarke, 2006; Dean and Sharp, 2006; Guest et al, 2012). An example of this is the NVivo electronic ability to generate codes quickly and also its search option, which supports the interrogation of data and helps to alleviate human error. However, a second school of thought is that NVivo software can result in less accurate analysis, for example, searches in NVivo can fail to identify accurately all the possibilities due to the different ways respondents may use terms to define a phenomena. Dean and Sharp (2006) argue that in order to achieve the best results it is important that researchers combine the best features of NVivo and manual methods. This thesis has adopted a mixed methods approach, utilising NVivo per the Braun and Clarke (2006) structured stages in order to ensure efficient organising, recording and coding methods for the 17 interviews.

In addition, throughout the coding process, manual referral back to the interview notes and audio files was continuous. However, once the themes emerge with the identification of the 9 categories, the usefulness of NVivo is limited due to the nature of searching capacity it offers, and attention switched to applying more manual methods to interpret and link the results and identify the various curatorial activities.

It is therefore suggested that the searching and organising tools of NVivo and the application of the Braun and Clarke’s (2006) model has supported and improved the rigour and therefore, reliability, of the data and analysis. As a consequence, it has supported the validation of the interpretation of the data. However, it is observed that one of the key benefits of qualitative research is that it allows the researcher to see and understand the broader context (Myers, 2013). It is acknowledged that coding remains dependent on the researcher’s interpretation of the terms and definitions used and therefore the level of objectivity will rarely equate to that of a quantitative research project. It is, therefore, dependent on the researcher to openly question his or her own subjective evaluation capabilities to understand and interpret the data.

4.2.4. Research Ethics

It is acknowledged that there are three major dimensions of ethics in qualitative research: procedural ethics (seeking approval to undertake research involving humans), ethics in practice (everyday ethical issues) and research ethics regarding codes of conduct during the research process (Guillemin and Gillam, 2004).

Regarding procedural ethics, as outlined in Chapter 3, at the beginning of each interview, each participant received the University of Manchester consent form and a brief 2-page overview of the goals of the research. Every participant read and signed the form before the interview commenced to ensure that all participants were fully informed about the procedures of the research and were comfortable to give their consent to participate.

With regards to ethics in practice, there were no unexpected or unpredicted announcements or communication by any of the 17 participants that created any ethical tension or issue.

Finally, regarding codes of conduct, confidentiality and anonymity were also assured, with the code referencing of names confirmed.

5. Findings

5.1. Introduction

Following the methodology chapter, which examined how the process of analysis was conducted, the findings chapter focuses on the nine themes and their related sub-themes, as highlighted in Table 5.1 below:

Table 5.1: Nine Key Themes and Sub-Themes

Theme Numbers	Themes
1	**Consumer Desires and Trends**
1.1.	Consumers Desire to be the Creative
1.2.	Consumers Desire for an Experience
1.3.	Consumer Desire for Luxury Brand Products and Symbols
2	**Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Brand Experience**
2.1.	Art is a Tool or a Strategy to Renew and Refresh the Brand and the Brand Experience in Store
2.2.	Art is Now Fashionable
2.3.	Art is to be Freely Experienced by the Individual in Luxury Retail
2.4.	Blurring Exists Between the Art Gallery and Shop Experience
2.5.	Synergies Between Art and Fashion as Fashion is a Form of Art and Designers are Artists
2.6.	Luxury Retailers Increase Brand Value Through the Artisan Story
3.	**Luxury Retail Environment**
3.1.	Design of the Luxury Retail Environment Borrows the Aura of Museums
3.2.	Luxury Retail Stores are Becoming Installation Exhibition Spaces
3.3.	The Role of Visual Merchandising and Art of Display in Luxury Retail is Critical to Brand Experience in Store
4.	**Curation Collaboration Across Sectors**
5.	**Perspectives on the Differences and Similarities of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions**
5.1.	Popularity of the Term Curation
5.2	Curation as a Term and Practice is Evolving
5.3.	Curation is More About Storytelling and Editing in Luxury Retail
5.4.	Curation Differs in Luxury Retail Due to Fast Pace
5.5	Usage of the Term Curation to Enhance the Value in Luxury Retail
5.6.	Curation is About Selling in Luxury Retail
5.7.	Curation in Luxury Retail is More Customer-Focused
5.8.	Financial Considerations that Influence Curation
5.9.	Curation is About Education in Both Environments
5.10.	Curation may Not Depend on Subject Matter Expertise
6.	**Curation in Luxury Retail**
6.1.	The Influence of Curation Across the Luxury Retail Organisation
6.2.	The Role of a Curator in Luxury Retail
7.	**Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience**
7.1.	Temporary Exhibition Curation is Similar to Luxury Retail Curation
7.2.	Similarity of Curatorial Skills of Exhibition Curators and Luxury Retail Curators
8.	**Typology of Curation**
8.1.	Seven Key Curatorial Activities in Luxury Retailing
9.	**The Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience**
9.1.	The Role of the Curator in the Design and Development of Brand Experience

The nine themes represent a broad range of findings, each providing different insights into the concept of curation and the context of designing and developing brand experience in the luxury retail environment. To illuminate the different findings, they are structured and presented in three findings chapters.

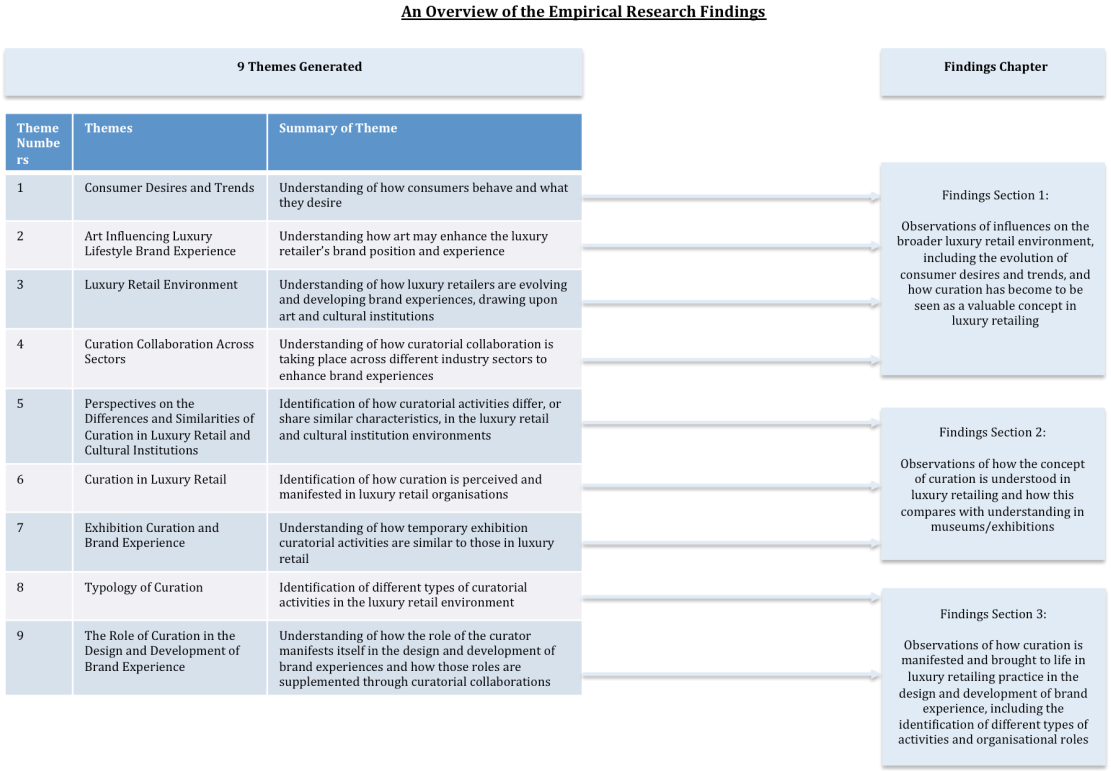
The first findings chapter, themes 1-4, is concerned with the broader environment regarding the observed evolution of consumer desires and trends and how and why curation has come to be seen as a relevant and potentially valuable concept or idea in luxury retailing.

The second findings chapter, themes 5-7, builds on the first set of findings as they focus on how, in light of the environment, the concept of curation is understood in luxury retailing. The themes also are concerned with how the understanding of curation in luxury retail compares to how it is understood, as both a concept and an activity, in the cultural environment of museums and exhibitions.

Finally, the third findings chapter, themes 8 and 9, is concerned with how curation is manifested, implemented and brought to life in luxury retailing practice. These themes include the identified different types of curation that are observed to exist in luxury retail today, the related curatorial activities and also the various identified curatorial roles in organisations. In light of the focus regarding how curation manifests itself in luxury retail today, and how it influences the design and development of brand experience, this findings section represents the area that will be the main focus of the discussion chapter.

The structure of the three findings chapters may be observed in Figure 5.1:

Figure 5.1: Structured Findings Themes by Chapter



Regarding the references for the different findings, the 17 participants were coded to ensure confidentiality as highlighted in Table 5.2:

Table 5.2: Table of Participant Codes

Respondent	Role	Organisation
R1	Director	Matchesfashion.com
R2	Director of Visual Identity	Liberty
R3	Manager of Concept Store	Louis Vuitton
R4	Senior Creative Manager of Research and Innovation	Selfridges
R5	Director of Buying and Merchandising	Liberty
R6	Designer	Liberty
R7	Creative Director and Director of Creative Enterprises	Mario Testino
RC1	ex Manager	Design Museum and British Museum
RC2	Director	Studio and House of Voltaire
C1	Director	British Museum
C2	Director of Exhibitions and Learning	Somerset House
C3	Curator	Barbican
C4	Curator	Ex Royal Collection
C5	ex Director of Programming now Director	Victoria & Albert Museum Somerset House
G1	Curator	Gallery/Online
G2	Curator	Richard Saltoun Gallery
EC1	Director	Metaphor Consultancy
Key	**R**	**Luxury Retail Professional**
	RC	**Luxury Retail / Cultural Institution Professional**
	C	**Cultural Institution Professional**
	G	**Gallery Professional**
	EC	**Experience Consultant to Cultural Institutions**

Table 5.3 highlights the contributions and key references provided by the 17 participants regarding the nine themes presented below. It may be observed that themes 8 and 9 are both commented on by the majority of the participants.

Table 5.3: Summary of Participant Contributions Across the Nine Themes

Themes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Respondents	Consumer Desires and Trends	Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Brand Experience	Luxury Retail Environment	Curation Collaboration Across Sectors	Perspectives on the Similarities and Differences of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions	Curation in Luxury Retail	Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience	Typology of Curation	Role of Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience
R1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
R2		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
R3	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
R4	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
R5			✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
R6	✓				✓			✓	✓
R7	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓
RC1		✓			✓			✓	✓
RC2		✓						✓	
C1				✓				✓	
C2			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C3		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
C4		✓		✓	✓			✓	✓
C5		✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
G1							✓		
G2					✓		✓	✓	✓
EC1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓

The first finding chapter will now review how and why curation has come to be seen as relevant and a potentially valuable concept in luxury retailing.

5.2. Findings Chapter One: Themes 1-4

This findings chapter explores observations of influences on the broader luxury environment, including the evolution of consumer desires and trends, and how curation has come to be seen as a valuable concept in luxury retailing.

It also sets the scene regarding how the respondents described the existing and evolving context of luxury retailing and the concept of curation as an increasingly integrated part of the luxury retailer brand experience. It was observed that the luxury retail environment is developing into one where the consumer no longer wishes to have a choreographed experience presented by sales and marketing people in the luxury retail environment. Instead, armed with unlimited information available online, driven by digital technologies available, today's consumer is both aware and interested in opportunities to express individual creativity.

The increase of the integration of art and culture into luxury retail was also observed to motivate and stimulate consumers creative interest, as well as serving to differentiate the luxury retail brand, and enhance both the aesthetic and economic value of products by being positioned as works of art or exclusive, one-off products of artisans. The blurring of art and luxury retail was observed to be an increasing trend and; coupled with many luxury retailers pursuing omni-channel strategies and now using stores as exhibition-type, installation spaces to deliver the brand experience, the number of cross-sector curatorial collaborations was commented to be rising. These themes are now presented.

5.2.1. Theme 1 – Consumer Desires and Trends

5.2.1.1. Consumers Desire to Be the Creative

All interviewees recognised that the growth of online retail has resulted in consumers having an unprecedented amount of choice and that people are seeking an opportunity to exercise their creativity.

R1 commented on the importance of providing customers with opportunities to curate their own edit and be part of a co-creation process:

"Editorial curation for us is hugely important. People realize that they can be creative, they can call in the whole edit, things they want to have and try it all on their home. So how do you do that online? You let people have their own wish lists. I think that is what social media is all about really, in terms of Instagram. Therefore, as a retailer and also being part of this co-

creation process, you have to be very open to the fluidity of it all so that you can go out there and find the best selection of products from designers that you think are the most interesting and have a strong point of view. You make sure that you present it in a way that's really compelling and curated for people so that it makes their lives easier to buy and engage with. Then you've got to listen to their ideas and how they want to curate it too."

EC1 also observed a cultural change that refers to people wishing to be creative and involved in co-creation:

"Everybody now thinks they're a creative. We've got this concept of co-creation and suddenly we've got clients who are not creative but insist on being the creative. This is something about our culture."

Respondents also discussed that the implication for luxury retailers is that consumers will want to take an increasingly bigger role in co-curation of experiences. The respondents commented that opportunities for the consumer to play the creative may differ online and in store, for example through the increasing new mobile applications and digital technologies and physical in-store engagement.

5.2.1.2. Consumers Desire For An Experience

The importance for the consumer to have an experience in the luxury retail environment that is both entertainment and educational, was recognised by respondents, as observed by R1 below:

"So, you can do all you want in terms of providing convenience online, but the physical experience is becoming more and more like an installation. Customers want to be delighted by something so if you're going to invite them to come into something physical, it's really about giving them that – as you said, a bit of theatre almost, and a bit of entertainment."

It was also commented on that consumers now face an unprecedented amount of choice and both online and in-store and retailers have a new set of challenges regarding the design and development of a brand experience. Curation was identified as a way for retailers to act as a trusted and credible filter and endorser and also provide opportunities to meet people's desire for experiences through the development of an edit:

"There's so much choice, so much noise, there's so many brands, so many products, online and in-store. I think actually the reason why curation keeps coming back up now is that

people want to go somewhere where they can have an experience, people do educate them and do delight them. Actually, it's very hard now to sift through it all. It's a lot of noise." (R1)

5.2.1.3. Consumer Desire for Luxury Brand Products and Symbols

It was identified that consumers possess a strong desire for luxury brand products, as evidenced by the ever-growing luxury market. The power of the luxury brands was recognised and stores referred to as "brand cathedrals" by R7:

"We are back in ancient Greek or Roman times and we have gods. Our gods are on pedestals and they go by the name of Burberry, Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Marc Jacobs and they are gods and they all serve different blessings on us. Be it if you wear this, you will look richer, if you wear this, you will look cooler, if you do that….and we go on pilgrimages to these (brand) cathedrals. You cannot believe what these brand cathedrals are like and people simply go on pilgrimages. No carrier bags come out they just go to worship at the door of Karl Lagerfeld."

The worshipping of luxury brands in their "brand cathedrals" was linked to the premise that brands are elevated to a higher status than just a functional product, something more akin to art. Further, that in order to enhance this perception, it was identified that luxury retailers pursue an art-infused brand strategy that builds positive associations with art e.g. rarity and timelessness, and also design their stores to reflect museums or galleries, often using the same architects in order create a similar aura and impression, as highlighted by Theme 2.

5.2.2. Theme 2 – Art Influencing Luxury Lifestyle Brand Experience

5.2.2.1. Art is a Tool or a Strategy to Renew and Refresh the Brand and the Brand Experience in Store

Deployment of art in luxury retail was widely observed by respondents as a method of enhancing the value of the brand. It was stated that the association with art ensures the luxury brand remains relevant as it pushes boundaries and connects to culture.

"Luxury retailers are looking for something with a deeper meaning which is the culture, that is the art and they want that." (C1)

RC1 was in agreement but highlighted that the linkage of art to the brand is to strategically differentiate the brand:

"Luxury brands and retailers are definitely moving into the art world as they are forever trying to enhance and develop their brands. It's definitely brand experience development, there's no question. To me, possibly within that environment, the starting point is the brand experience, how do we evolve it, how do we shape it, how we create something exceptional. Let's make these unbelievable stores, let's get this link with art and artists"

Investment in art foundations was also identified also be part of the strategy. R3 referred to the recently opened Frank Gehry-designed signature arts centre in Paris, "Fondation Louis Vuitton" which was commissioned by CEO Bernard Arnault to house LVMH's art collection and provide a platform for diverse cultural programmes.[22]:

"All the pieces of art that we have in store could be moved around and replaced and refreshed through the Louis Vuitton Fondation and throughout the store. That's the idea I think."

Luxury retailers also observed that the desire to include art in the stores and brand experiences was also due to the fact that art is fashionable with their target customers, discussed in the next theme.

5.2.2.2. Art is Now Fashionable

It was identified that art has become increasingly fashionable and therefore, desirable for luxury consumers. It was identified to be part of a luxury lifestyle with the same consumers interested in both art and fashion and a natural inclusion in the luxury retail proposition. Respondents discussed that art has become an another asset class or status symbol that people wish to buy as an investment and therefore something that luxury retailers would wish to associate with, as observed by C5 and C4:

"Consumers have more and more money and art is fashionable now in a way that it wasn't in the 1980s." (C5)

"Art is becoming just another asset class that people just buy for investment without much interest or actual understanding of the longer-term value and meaning of the work that they're

[22] Arnault states that "LVMH and its maisons have always stood for a certain art de vivre, founded on old-world craftsmanship in the service of an ever-evolving creativity and modernity. For the men and women of the LVMH ground, this new cultural institution will be a source of pride and a symbol of who they are and the work they do." http://www.architecturaldigest.com/architecture/2014-10/frank-gehry-fondation-louis-vuitton-arts-center-article (Accessed 21.9.15)

buying. I do think it's an asset class for people and it's a status symbol, like a Hermes bag or whatever." (C4)

R7 also observed that art has become fashionable and the inclusion of art in displays or collections by luxury brands in the luxury retail environment is a method to validate that the luxury brand or retailer is also fashionable:

"On the whole some luxury brands are pretty damn classic and don't take any risks but the art-influenced environment is the endorsement – so we know what's modern, we know what's cool, we're happening and if you come in here that means that you're happening too."

In addition, it was commented that art in the context of the luxury retail environment and also through the lens of fashion, could be more easily accessed and enjoyed. This theme is now reviewed.

5.2.2.3. Art is to be Freely Experienced by the Individual in Luxury Retail

In discussion, all interviewees referred to the importance of building a brand experience that, where it involves art or artistic content, enables consumers to experience art freely and individually. The importance of having the freedom of experiencing art how one would wish, was compared to that of a more formal cultural institution or gallery, which was referred to as positioning art as above the visitor experience and being elitist. As highlighted by R2:

"It's bringing art out into the public realm. I actually think art can be quite egotistical and be elitist in its form and traditional ways of experiencing it, as it wants intelligence to be able to experience it properly. There's no right or wrong way of experiencing anything. It's nice to have art in our community in the shopping environment as well as galleries."

The emphasis of the luxury retailer acting as a mediator or facilitator to encourage people to interact with the art in the way freely and individually was discussed by R1 and R4:

"Whether it's an exhibition visitor or shopper, you've got to allow a sense of the individual, how they want to experience it and how they want to choose touch points and what they want to take away from it." (R1)

"It's pretty much down to how they engage with us, how they engage with the brand. It doesn't have to be how we want them to do it." (R4)

However, the MBLR respondents stressed that the brand experience was to be customer-focused and therefore, art or any other subject matter would not over-ride this.

5.2.2.4. Blurring Exists Between the Art Gallery and Shop Experience

Interviewees reported that blurring between an art gallery and shop experiences exists and is increasing.

C3 commented that the concept of the blurring of the art gallery and shop is not a new one and that it is interesting as it presents a number of questions:

"Retailers and art and museums is a very interesting conundrum and it's not anything new. Pure design started to be functional objects that people could buy in shops and were exhibited in museums in the late 19th century. MOMA did a whole series of good design for under $5 in the 1940s."

"It opens up an interesting set of questions about the ways in which you're being asked to look at objects and to think about them." (C3)

"What is it about something that means we might want to collect it and preserve it, but also what is it about the way we consumer or the objects we consume that makes them interesting enough to warrant enquiry in a gallery or a museum context?" (C3)

C3 also commented on the nature of blurring in today's luxury retail environment:

"There is much more of a overtly blurring of the boundaries between gallery and shop which is very interesting. Louis Vuitton working with Kusama, for example, it's very interesting poetry. Fashion houses particularly in recent years have been very interested in that cross-over and what artists represent."

The establishment of a gallery retail store, the House of Voltaire, was identified as an example of the blurring between an art gallery and a luxury retail store.[23] It was discussed that the House of Voltaire differed from a museum shop as rather than selling copies of

[23] The House of Voltaire is a new luxury retail store that offers a range of original art works and editions, with the proceeds of which raises funds for Studio Voltaire's gallery. Products are commissioned especially for House of Voltaire, with limited editions by leading artists and designers. Studio Voltaire, a 20-year old Arts Council-funded charity offers an ambitious public programme of exhibitions, commissions, live events and offsite projects. It seeks to invest in the production of work by commissioning new projects that may not always be possible within institutional or commercial frameworks and its programme is intergenerational, supporting emerging and underrepresented practices and allowing artists to develop new work on their own terms. It claims to draw inspiration from the concept of fashion ateliers as well as artist's shops. It opens once a year in London and New York and was recently opened in Miami at the NADA Art Fair. The types of products on sale in the hybrid gallery-luxury store include: art/fashion collaborations, limited edition artworks, limited edition publications by artists, special products and unique artworks

artefacts as found in museum shops, it straddled both art gallery and luxury retail store, as it sells works of art or unique pieces by artists that are shown in Studio Voltaire itself.

RC2 discussed how the blurring of art and luxury retail in the House of Voltaire is an attractive proposition to both artists and consumers:

“I think artists have really enjoyed being involved with it and see it as a way of getting their work out there and maybe in a quite an interesting way as well. We can be a bit more experimental, maybe stuff you wouldn’t get at Liberty.”

The success of the shop, with potential collaborations with luxury retailers, such as www.net-a-porter.com, indicates that art is fashionable and people desire to have a product that is both, and at once, art and fashion (able).

5.2.2.5. Synergies Between Art and Fashion as Fashion is a Form of Art and Designers are Artists

Respondents recognised that synergies exist between fashion and art as fashion is a form of art and sits underneath the umbrella of art. One of the reasons for the synergy provided was that designers themselves are artists, therefore, the work that they do is a form of art, which is brought to life in stores.

As commented on by R1:

“In fact there’s a huge synergy between art and design. Fashion is a form of art. It can all sit underneath an umbrella. We have worked quite frequently with artists. We’ve done installations in the stores. So it’s a conversation that’s very out there.”

RC1 agreed that fashion is a form of art and also pointed out that one can validate that fashion creation is a work of art as it is related to the value people place on the fashion creation:

“Who’s to say designing a creation is not a work of art like a painting is, if people are going to value it?”

RC2 also recognised that there is a positive cross-over between art and fashion and identifies that the rationale may not only be due to the fact that fashion designers are artists, but that arts working in the two environments may share similar causes, interests or concerns.

“In London, there’s a really healthy fashion scene at the moment with independent designers. That’s actually been a healthy crossover. So, it’s been interesting that we have designers engaging properly with our programme with similar concerns or interests. Therefore, they come over to House of Voltaire and there’s a natural synergy.”

The uniqueness or rarity of art was also related to that of a limited edition collection or product collaboration with an artist. Further, that the art that the designer creates is responsible for informing luxury retail strategy or activities, suggesting a considerable influence on the luxury retailer and, as a consequence, brand experience for the customer. The recognition that artists collaborate with luxury retailers on a regular basis, suggests that the luxury retailer has identified that there is a positive consequence of promoting the artist-luxury relationship to the consumer.

5.2.2.6. Luxury Retailers Increase Brand Value Through the Artisan Story

Respondents stated that luxury retailers use the concept of the artisan, based on the origins of the luxury brand, to demonstrate the exclusivity, rarity and specialist nature of a luxury product. However, they claimed that this story may not always be the case and is only deployed to retain the air of luxury, craftsmanship and mystery, even though that large luxury brands are manufacturing en mass. In particular, EC1 argued that the role of the artisan story is one that is presented in order to sustain the mystery of the brand and brand narrative, when the facts are quite different in reality:

“Products are in reality all made in the same big tin box. The connection to art is allowing the brand to keep a mystery or a story alive, that actually you are buying this crafted product and it’s not mass manufactured as we know. It’s a huge producer in reality and a puppet story.”

RC1 was in agreement and pointed out that the connection to creative and artisanal associations added more positive attributes to the product as well as a sense of justification for the high prices of the luxury goods:

“I think with something like LVMH, when you’re trying to sell a handbag that’s £10K, whatever price, you have to attach a few other things to it, so it’s very good marketing.”

It was discussed that the rationale behind maintaining the artisan story is to provide emotional brand attributes to products, i.e. there is a genuine person who is highly skilled and also has a real story behind the product, as well as functional brand attributes to products, i.e. the person is highly specialized craftsman/woman who is the antithesis of mass manufacturing and produces only the highest quality in limited numbers.

The presentation and communication of cultural and creative associations by luxury retailers in a physical sense is now reviewed in the findings in Theme 3.

5.2.3. Theme 3 – Luxury Retail Environment

5.2.3.1. Design of the Luxury Retail Environment Borrows from the Aura of Museums

It was acknowledged that luxury stores, particularly flagship stores, are emulating the space, lighting, and art of display of that found in museums, as observed by EC1:

“Actually, in shops, what it is, it’s the aura of a museum that’s being borrowed. It’s a bit like artists who are also fascinated with the museum, like Damien Hirst who puts things in cabinets and jars. It’s what the museum looks like and feels like rather than what the museum is.”

R1 also commented on the drawing of inspiration of museums in the design of luxury stores:

“One of the clever things of stores like Hermes, the Louis Vuitton and stores like that is the experience in store is close to a museum. You will go into those stores because the way in which they are designed but also curated. The space and working with such interesting architects make the space feel fantastic.”

The purpose of which was discussed to be threefold. Firstly, to spotlight the importance of the product itself and create a stage to present the products in their best light. Secondly, to create an impressive space which enables the luxury retailer to play out the desired brand experience, and thirdly, to create a destination in itself, an iconic must-see location. The art of display in museums regarding precious artefacts or curated collections is therefore something that luxury retailers regard as something of value. The enclosing of items behind glass was observed to be done due to items being rare or valuable and requiring protection. Recognition that luxury retailers borrow or draw inspiration from visual presentation or displays in museums also highlights the linkage to museum curation with luxury retail.

5.2.3.2. Luxury Retail Stores are Becoming Installation Exhibition Spaces

The evolution of the luxury retail store was discussed in the context of huge online retail growth and the increasing pressure to ensure that the physical brand experience was even more compelling and a venue to bring the brand experience to life. It was recognized that stores need to deliver innovative experiences, offering entertainment, theatre and education. In addition, the store was presented as a physical space where marketing opportunities, as

opposed to sales opportunities (as increasingly online) were critical, as observed by R1 below:

“If you are going to make your customers come to something physical, it’s really about giving them a bit of theatre, within it, a bit of entertainment. The physical experience is becoming more and more like an installation. I think increasingly with the way things go online, your stores are your installation spaces and they are your marketing opportunities. It’s less about whether you’re doing the depths of sales in the stores, but they’re your brand opportunity and they’re your physical touch points.”

R2 was in agreement and stated that installations need to be experiences:

“It (the installation) needs to be something to experience. Brand experience operates on many different levels. I’m curating every day.”

R4 was also in agreement but went on to state that creative installations, and their resulting experiences, that are offered to customers are the basis of competition and a major contributor to the profitability and growth of the company:

“They’re (Selfridges) very precious about their creative direction, ideas and installations. Experiences are competition.”

The importance of the curation of the installation and art of display was discussed also and is now reviewed in the next theme.

5.2.3.3. The Role of Visual Merchandising and Art of Display in Luxury Retail is Critical to Brand Experience In Store

The interviewees mentioned how critical the art of display and using visual merchandising to bring the brand to life is as they together they hold the brand experience together consistently and form a coherent story. Two key reasons were identified why visual merchandising and the art of display is critical to brand experience, one, to support the customer to identify and experience the brand identity, and two, to ensure consistent delivery of brand experience in store.

R5 spoke about the importance of visual merchandising for brand experience and how it aims to support the communication of a brand experience concept, but also importantly, generate a specific emotion, desire, for customers:

“Visual merchandising is key for the brand experience as it starts out with the concept that you’re looking for, then it goes into research and the sourcing of the products and then making sure it’s cohesive and it makes sense and is an experience at the end. It’s about the creation of desire.”

R2 also commented that the objective of visual merchandising and the art of display is to create a brand story that allows the customer to have a consistent point of reference and experience. However, R2 stressed that this is especially important in the context of a MBLR, where there are many brand stories to coordinate:

“Having a point of reference from beginning to end, a seed that threads right through everything is much easier to do with one brand. Liberty is a big beast. So that’s why you’ve got to get to the heart of (the brand) and actually use it as an anchor for visual merchandising. I see it very much as Liberty is a home for its brands.”

In addition, R2 also observed other external, macro factors that influence the brand and how visual merchandising and the art of display supports and enables the design and development of the brand experience:

“In Liberty, they want to extend fashion and its presence from a British purveyor of unique fashion. Probably more so than anybody in else in London. But then there’s a seasonality that will kick in, creative movements showcasing in galleries and films and also big business trends, which can extend through fashion. You’ve got to think about the many categories and giving brand presence to some of those very obviously brand driven stories and slotting that all visually together.”

The importance of the art of display was noted to be such that luxury retailers often sought external support, advice and creative input through collaborations, which are now reviewed in Theme 4.

5.2.4. Theme 4 – Curation Collaboration Across Sectors

Curator respondents stated that they had collaborated with luxury retailers to curate windows, displays and installations. It was commented that the desire to collaborate was for the luxury retailer to differentiate itself and project a deeper meaning for the products that the luxury retailer was selling, in order to present the products in a superior, highly attractive way to customers and, therefore, enhance sales and growth of the company.

C3 talked about the numerous collaborations she had worked with luxury retailers, stating that:

“There is a desire, I think for high-end luxury stores and big department stores to offer a different kind of experience that sits alongside pure consumptions. We often work in association with shops to curate and market an exhibition. We’ve done curatorial projects with Liberty, they did a whole set of windows in response to a subject of an exhibition – the Surreal House exhibition.”

The employment of curators in multi-luxury brand stores to enhance display was mentioned to be a method of differentiation, similar to the use of art in sole luxury brand flagship stores. The linkage to current exhibitions, also similar to the use of artists, was discussed as a strategy to portray the luxury retailer as innovative. In addition, it was mentioned that luxury retailers desire to reference the big, spectacular and immersive exhibition-type experiences that luxury department stores used to present in the 19th and 20th centuries and therefore seek out exhibition curators, as commented on by C3:

“Fashion houses and retailers in particular, have been very interested in the cross-over. In some ways it may be that they’re asking curators to come and do windows, they’re trying to create that again, that resurgence of that spectacle or the spectacular exhibition in some ways. You can understand that it is their way to differentiate themselves too.”

The employment of curators in store was also mentioned, for example, that Louis Vuitton seek out guest curators, key people in the public eye, often famous or upcoming photographers or artists, who are perceived as current and innovative to collaborate on in-store curation projects. Collaborations may focus on designing pieces of art, special one-off editions or productions for Louis Vuitton. This type of collaboration with photographers or designers who contribute to the collection, into promotion of their creative thought process or inspiration for their work was identified as a key method of inviting customers to enjoy a special brand experience and feel special as they gain an insight into the artistic or creative world.

As stated by R3: “We’re going to have a creative shelf with Jurgen Teller which would make sense at the moment because we have his book in Dover Street Market and New Bond Street stores, which he photographed our first collection with our new designers, Nicholas Ghesquiere. It is really curated.”

However, R3 discussed that even though these types of collaborations create a special type of brand experience and help the Louis Vuitton brand stay current, it is important that they increase in sales.

“In a luxury retail environment you want people to buy things, not just to come and see and not to buy things. So, yes, you might have a successful collaboration that gets a lot of coverage but if ultimately it doesn’t sell anything, I don’t think it’s considered a large success. It’s not enough for us to have people come and see it, more to buy it.”

Focus on the commercial aspects of curatorial collaboration in luxury retail was one theme that was mentioned by the respondents and one used as an example to highlight the differences between the luxury retail and cultural institution environments. The different perspectives regarding how the concept of curation is understood in the two environments are now reviewed in the next Findings Chapter.

6. Findings Chapter Two: Themes 5-7

This chapter reviews the findings regarding of how the concept of curation is understood in luxury retailing and how this compares with understanding in museums and exhibitions. In light of the many different perspectives articulated, it is observed that what appeared to be a relatively simple and domain-specific concept has evolved to become so complex, multi-dimensional and inter-disciplinary that it defies a short and universal definition.

Theme 5 highlights the various observations made by the respondents regarding the elements of curation in their respective environments. Comparisons relating to how the term curation is understood and how curation differs within and between the two environments were also made. A distinction was also made between the nature and type of curation in permanent collections and temporary exhibitions in the cultural environment. In addition, many similarities between curatorial objectives and activities in luxury retailing and temporary exhibitions were highlighted. For example, it was commented by both luxury retailers and temporary exhibition curators that there exists a shared focus on designing and developing a multi-sensory and immersive experience and also providing opportunities for co-curation with consumers or visitors. These curatorial similarities have led to multiple curatorial collaborations and increased the blurring between luxury retail and cultural environments.

6.1. Theme 5 – Perspectives on the Differences and Similarities of Curation in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions

In Theme 5, 10 sub-themes were observed regarding the perspectives on the differences and similarities of curation in luxury retail and cultural institutions.

6.1.1. Popularity of the Term Curation

It was observed that the word “curation” has become a popular buzzword, not only in luxury retail, but also in the press and common parlance. It was commented that the term has become fashionable and aspirational:

As stated by C3:

“I think everybody’s calling everybody a curator at the moment”

“It has become a hot word. You curate your own dinner party. You curate your wedding. Which, I suppose, implies a lot of truths actually that what you’re doing is assembling things to tell a story, to illuminate a subject, to find something interesting to say about a collection of

things or ideas that you feel – in acting as a curator, that you feel are interesting and warrants attention or a new scholarship work, a fresh perspective."

C2 reflected on the rise of Pinterest, Instagram and other social media where people use the word "curated" regularly and claim to be a curator:

"Everyone uses it. Everyone's a curator, or so they think." (C2)

It was also identified that the term "curator", a term that originates from museums and one that has not been traditionally known as a highly innovative or creative role, has recently become so:

As stated by EC1:

"There's a very strange thing that has happened in places like Tate Modern, where the curator has become sort of beyond an art guru to being a bit like an iconic DJ, remixing. The curator is now a famous creative."

The increase in the usage of the term in the retail environment was also identified, as stated by C4:

"What I think is interesting about curation is that I've noticed in the last few years the word "curation" is being applied to everywhere – it's on [the web site of] Net-a-Porter.com, Selfridges, John Lewis. I mean to curate a shoe collection. We have curated the Fall bag look or whatever. You can curate a playlist now. So I think the word curation, which was quite specific say, 10, 15, 20 years ago when I started my career, has become used more generally as a sort of posh word for collection, selection, but that is not really how I understand it, nor how I would use it. I mean, to me, being a curator means having an idea and knowledge about a theory about something one would wish to educate. It is arrogant to think one doesn't need to know a lot about things before attempting to curate them."

The findings above highlight how the term curation is evolving as it is moving away from the traditional art-historian context and being adopted by other disciplines, such as retail and fashion. In addition, it highlights that the democratization of the term curation has led to the evolution of different forms of curation e.g. personal curation, music curation and digital curation. The findings also indicate that even in cultural institutions, the meaning of the term curation is changing according to the context it finds itself.

6.1.2. Curation as a Term and Practice is Evolving

It was noted that despite the term "curation" being increasingly used, the research found that the term "curation" remains without a clear and agreed definition, and the meaning is still being debated.
As stated by C3:

"I found it quite surprising that if you google "curation" many references come up relating to "digital curation", yet if you write the word "curator" in Microsoft Word, it doesn't exist. You've got spellcheck error coming up. People are still getting to grips with what this means."[24]

R4 also commented that despite the historical association with art, the term curation is changing, to the point of it no longer even relating to the art world:

"The word "curation" is historical, mis-construed, yet future facing. How can you define all of that in one word? I think it is changing. I've read a lot of stuff in the last couple of years that almost argues against the meaning of "curation" relating to the art world, existing in that form."

It was also identified that curation may mean different things to people as it is a term that describes how people utilise their knowledge, expertise or experience to identify and select objects to create a story and develop an immersive experience, regardless of the environment or discipline they may find themselves in.

C2 observed that the term curation related to the application of expertise to select objects and develop an experience and, as such, how the term curation could be applied to any environment:

"I mean it's hard to define exactly what it is, but I think you could be a curator of things. You could be a curator of a festival. You could be a curator of an exhibition. They curate. They bring their expertise to bear on it and select and choose things and it's about where you position them and what goes next to what and all that kind of thing."

C2 also provided examples to demonstrate the experience focus of curation:

"It depends on what you're curating. I've curated lots of things. I've curated Selfridges windows, I've curated festivals, I've curated outdoor experiences. It's just all about experience. Just being very clear about what you're trying to say to the people and what

[24] As of August 2015, when searching for the word "curation" in Microsoft Word Reference Tools, nothing exists under thesaurus, synonyms and dictionary. When searching for the word "curator", the noun "warden" appears and under synonyms "warden", "custodian", "keeper", "steward", "guardian", "overseer", "superintendent" and "supervisor"

you're hoping they can take away from the experience. If it's something you want them to learn, if it's something you want to show them, you have to be very clear about that and just think about the best way to do it."

R2 also agreed and stated that the term curation is evolving, can refer to any environment and is concerned with experience:

"You can curate an art piece, an art show, just one room...because it links everything together in an experience. An environment of dressing a scarf hall is exactly the same practice as an exhibition, exactly the same."

The findings highlight that the term curation is neither fully recognised, nor possesses a universal, agreed-upon definition, yet suggests that curation comprises of different activities that focus on providing an experience, which can be delivered across any format.

This suggests that the interpretation of the term has evolved from the traditional art-historian form of curation where scholarly expertise and focus of the curator is on the object rather than the experience. The comments made by C2 and R2 that it is possible to curate anything, suggests that curation therefore may not depend on subject matter expertise relating to objects, but rather the ability to communicate a story and deliver an experience.

6.1.3. Curation is More About Storytelling and Editing in Luxury Retail

The respondents from both the luxury retail and cultural environments commented that the process of editing, selecting and presenting are fundamental building blocks in the process of curation. However, despite the identified shared elements of editing activities, it was mentioned that museum curators are focus more on objects and less on developing an edit and creating a story for customers or visitors for the purpose of creating an overall experience, which was observed to be at the detriment of the customer experience.

It was also mentioned that luxury retailers curate with the objective of communicating a powerful narrative as part of the brand experience to entice people to the store, to have a positive experience and to ultimately, consume. On the other hand, it was commented that museum curators develop a narrative for a general, wider audience, which is education-focused and not related to consumption. It was asserted that museum curators are not as good at editing as retailers due to a tendency for museum curators to focus on the artefacts, rather than the story and presentation.

C5 stated that in both environments editing is key in the curation process:

“Editing in a museum as a curator and in retail is a really similar process. It’s about making choices. I mean the important thing for any curator is to make intelligent choices but in doing that it means that they have to be able to edit.”

Another curator, C2, was in agreement:

“Things like editing and curating, (we) share a lot of the same things in the retail and museum or exhibition world.”

Luxury retailers, R2 and R5, were also in agreement from the luxury retail perspective:

“I do think there are shared elements of curating in retail – the idea, the mixing, the editing and the collection building.” (R5)

However, a key difference was also identified regarding the purpose of the edit. C5 mentioned the role of the curator in luxury retail is about editing, making choices and curating a display that is the most attractive to people and inspires them to buy:

“It’s all about choice and it’s about display and it seems to me that retail is all about choice. About people making choices and displaying it in such a way that people can then do the right thing which is to buy what you’ve got on sale”

R2 commented also that making choices regarding editing and storytelling is key in luxury retail as it revolves around curating a positive brand experience that enables and motivates people to shop, is commercially focused and increases profits for the business:

“When you’ve got millions and millions of products it’s got to be shoppable, churn out a certain amount of cash for the business, easy to understand and create a brand experience that has impact”

C5 also commented that museum curators are not as good as editing as retailers due to a tendency for museum curators to focus on the artefacts rather than the aesthetics and the story and presentation, and therefore include all of them in a limited space.

“Curators imagine that everyone wants to see everything, they don’t – they want the story. Now most curators in museums find it very difficult to edit. So therefore they try and fill their cases full of crap, rather than find the few things that will really tell a story. That’s one of the biggest battles we had, was to try and get people to just edit. It’s the whole thing about just cramming everything you’ve got in the case, it’s not actually necessarily very good.” (C5)

EC1 also agreed that curators in museums tend to focus on their subjects and artefacts but are not good storytellers, at the expense of the visitor experience, calling it “the kiss of death”:

“I think curators aren't storytellers. I think this is a real problem. I think curators are people who generally look after objects and very often know their subject. But often academics in the same subject can know it better. A curator is somebody who, go into store with them and they pick up this object and they will tell you about it amazingly. Give them a gallery and tell them write a label and put it in a glass case and it's the kiss of death. They're not professional storytellers.”

From a luxury retail perspective, the focus of the luxury retailer to edit and carefully select only products that help tell a powerful story was also commented on by R2:

“I think a good curator will tell a very powerful, concise story of an era or a trend. A good curator is also a very good editor and isn’t shy of knocking things out and not including too, or not showing too little or too much.”

R2 also mentioned that luxury retail curators differ from museum curators in that due to the speed and pace of change in luxury retail, resulting in editing and storytelling being developed at a much faster rate. This difference noted in speed and pace of editing and creating storytelling in the process of curation in the two different environments is discussed and reviewed in the next theme.

6.1.4. Curation Differs in Luxury Retail Due to Fast Pace

This theme illustrates a major difference in curation in the luxury retail and cultural environments. Luxury retailers are driven by a seasonal fashion cycle. In contrast, museums tend to be driven by funding or sponsorships that dictate the number of exhibitions and collections it may show. Retail curation therefore is shorter-term in nature, driven by a faster cycle and relies on quick and continuous development of new ideas on a regular basis.

R2 stated that due to the fast pace and seasonal nature of fashion that drives luxury retailers, the speed and pace of curation in retail is far quicker:

“It’s about developing something creative that could communicate and have visibility as well as flexibility because timing is important. Retail moves much quicker. You’ve to be a much faster, quicker curator .”

R7 also commented on the difference in the pace of curation in both environments based on her personal experience as a consultant for the V&A Museum:

“I got involved curating the permanent collection at the V&A and I can tell you they can’t change. You know shop people in retail change a window sometimes twice a day. The V&A couldn’t change, even these little side betweens. They couldn’t change it more than once every six months because they were all too busy. I’m like “what are you on?” They are the sheepish people in the world and they have no concept of the outside world or their customer or what they’re trying to say to the fashion world, or the fashion business or fashion designers even. I mean I think they just know the difference between an inverted pleat...”

Respondents stated that the time for research and steps along the curation process are faster also, requiring a different set of skills and knowledge base than that of a cultural curator. One of the key reasons for the difference in pace of curation identified was linked to the commercial, sales focus of retail and the need for luxury retailers to achieve short-term sales targets based on seasonal collections, a theme that is now reviewed.

6.1.5. Curation is About Selling in Luxury Retail

Findings refer to how the role of curation in luxury retail is focused on driving sales. From both luxury retail and cultural institution interviewee perspectives, this appears to be the biggest differential in curation in the two environments.

The commercial imperative was acknowledged by the luxury retailers who stated that it influenced the way retailers curate, for example, considerations such as historical sales figures and customer requests and therefore was not “purist” curation. It was commented that luxury retailers must therefore remain flexible, but nonetheless, share many curatorial activities with cultural institutions, in particular, editing, story-telling and collection building.

Cultural curators stated that whilst it may be possible to curate in luxury retail, it was argued that it’s just using non-commercial terminology to elevate the status of the products.

As stated by C4:

“I’m sure it’s possible to curate in luxury retail but I’m sure it’s not curation. I think its just using non-commercial terminology to try and make commercial things seem more – give them more status I think. It’s just selling, isn’t it?”

C4 stated that the key differential is that curation in luxury retail is sales-focused and is not applying intellectual theory and, therefore, intellectual value, unlike curation in cultural institutions.

“For example, if you take Liberty and their exhibitions in-store. There’s no intellectual concept behind that. There’s no intellectual theory there. They’re not – Liberty isn’t trying to make us think, they’re trying to make us buy, which is absolutely fine and why we’re there. I think that when Selfridges starts messing around with artists and they do that, I think, don’t they, it becomes quite blurry. It would be interesting to know if it’s been good for sales or not. Whether that kind of adding intellectual value or adding cultural value works for retail. I don’t know, I think Liberty are doing anything more than trying to sell through bringing these things together.” (C4)

RC1, was in agreement that curation in luxury retail focuses on selling:

“Ultimately, luxury retailers are there to make money so they’re trying to make a profit. So you’ve got to buy it at the right price, you’ve got to sell it at the right price, it’s got to fit in with what you’re trying to achieve and meet all of those criteria. So the end criteria is about selling, which is different to a cultural institution like a museum.”

R6 also recognised that curation does differ between cultural institutions and luxury retail due to the commercial imperative:

“The difference is that the whole process isn’t in a bubble. Because there are other things that come into play that affect the curation process, that editing process, such as previous best-selling, best-performing colours, requests from the public, the shopfloor. Things that haven’t sold or performed well in the past, historical analysis of sales figures and data which is maybe different to the museum world.”

However, it was recognized by R6 that there is increasing pressure on museums and other cultural institutions to meet commercial pressures and therefore are likely to increasingly be bound by similar constrictions, regarding visitor sales and attendance figures. R6 stated that not only luxury retailers are bound by commercial objectives and there are parallels in both environments:

“I think there are financial constraints on both unless you are truly independent. Both need to sell. Museums and luxury retailers are also bound by the same constriction at the end of the day which is that you have to make money in order to continue what you’re doing, so there is an element of selling in both.”

"You can't do art or make beautiful fashion design in a vacuum. It has to be something that keeps you alive and keeps you afloat to allow you to continue to pursue your passion. That means that sometimes you have to compromise. Sometimes you have to make something you know that will sell – tickets or products. Sometimes you have to do a blockbuster exhibition. Sometimes you have to do a gift shop. Sometimes you have to make rubbers and pencils. That is just part and parcel of it because without that you would never get to do the things that you love. It is true of artists and designers – if you don't sell then how you keep on painting or designing? I think the important thing is the balance of it. Obviously, you would expect a retailer's balance should be a bit more heavily weighted in the compromise section than a museum. But there are still parallels." (R6)

R2 also commented on the need for luxury retailers to compromise and that in order to achieve both objectives – the curation of an experience that delights and one that sells – is to remain flexible despite possible restrictions:

"It's restrictive sometimes but if you can have a balance of both curation and commercialism. I think it's where you've always got to try and do a bit of both at the same time to gain that satisfaction because you'll always have people that view things and have an opinion and enjoy it as a creative experience, but there will always be people on the other side that are tracking the numbers and, oh dear, that didn't work. So you've always got to have a back-up plan, you need components that are endlessly flexible. That's really important."

The design and development of sales-focused curation in luxury retailing is commented on in the next theme in the context of using the term curation to enhance the value of products in luxury retail.

6.1.6. Usage of the Term Curation to Enhance the Value in Luxury Retail

Various respondents from cultural institutions identified that the term "curation" was being used deliberately by retailers to enhance the value of their work practices, for example, visual merchandising, and also the products sold.

As stated by C4:

"Curating is about adding value to something. I think it is possible to do this in the luxury retail world, but I'm not sure it's called curation. I think using that word in luxury retail is just using non-commercial terminology to make commercial things more, give them more status I think."

The application of the term "curation" to elevate the retailer proposition in regards to visual merchandising was also observed by C1:

“It just sounds a bit more classy, a bit more upmarket. Therefore, you’ve got a point of difference over your person in the next shop next door, who’s just put stuff on the shelf.”

This sentiment was echoed by RC1:

“It’s a very posh way of saying I’ve created this. You know, it’s quite a creative way of saying it. Sometimes, it’s true, sometimes, a bit over-used. If you can curate your shop, it’s quite a nice thing for somebody to say “this looks very well put together.”

“In retail, the term could be seen as a little pretentious.” (RC1)

RC1 also indicated that the use of the term curation by luxury retailer was a deliberate “move” to not only attempt to add value but also differentiate the brand and brand experience:

“Retailers are trying to move into curation because I think they’re forever trying to differentiate – it’s all part of brand development. What’s our brand experience, how do we evolve it and how do we create something exceptional. Let’s make these unbelievable stores, let’s link with artists, let’s curate. It sort of goes on.” (RC1)

The permanent collection curator, C4, also believed that the term “curation” is being used incorrectly or inappropriately. It was commented that the term curation is being used as a sales tactic to make people believe that by being “curated”, products have a higher value, and therefore, motivate the customer to purchase:

“I’m not sure how far the word curation should be applied to things outside the art world or the museum world, because to me it’s quite a specific thing. That word curation has been cheapened by its use in the business world. Liberty aren’t trying make us think, they’re trying to make us buy. It’s effectively selling, isn’t it?” (C4)

However, despite firmly stating that luxury retailers, such as Liberty, may reference the term curation in a way that does not accurately reflect the academic and scholarship elements of it, C4 also states that there are many similarities between a curator and a buyer in luxury retail:

“Very early on in my career I was offered a job as a buyer (in retailing). I very much wanted to be a buyer and I was offered this job as a buyer and I decided not to take it. I decided to take the path that I have taken but at that point I think I could definitely see in a way that there are similarities between these things, the idea of selection, the idea of choosing the right thing. I guess that is a crossover in a way. That womenswear buyer in Liberty, she does a very good job. A better job than a lot of curators actually.”

It was also questioned by C3 why the retail environment needed to reference curation, however, it was recognised that curation may exist in luxury retail as a different type of practice of curation:

"Sometimes it can seem just zeitgeisty rather than it being really carefully thought through. They (retailers) move at such a pace that you can't imagine them sitting there having quite an in-depth research based discussion on curatorial practice. I guess one needs to ask why they're doing that. What is it about visual merchandising that they find wanting and what is it that they're trying to recover, add value or imply by using the word "curator". I think that is the interesting issue. However, then I think that's suggesting that visual merchandisers don't do that and I think they do, absolutely, but I think they just represent a different type of practice. It opens up questions about what are the motivations, the status of the artefacts." (C3)

The findings highlight how the more traditional cultural institutions view the retailer usage of the term curation and perceive it to be a tactic or manipulation of the term to enhance the value of retail activities. It is not embraced but rather rejected by the cultural institution as a valid application of the term curation. However, it is observed that the usage of the term curation in the luxury retail context may refer to a different form of curation, which may be influenced by different factors, such as speed and pace of the retail industry, the short-term nature of commercial objectives and the focus on the linking of products to develop an overall experience versus presentation of objects and intellectual value contribution. Consequently, this different type of curation may offer other forms of value that relate to the luxury retailer customer. For example, experiential or emotional value to consumers and therefore, may not be restricted to the education-driven, intellectual value typically associated with cultural institution curation. This form of curation with a focus on the generation of value for the customer is now reviewed in the next theme.

6.1.7. Curation in Luxury Retail is More Customer Focused

The theme refers to the interviewees commentary that curation is customer-focused in luxury retail and less so in cultural institutions. It was identified that this is due to firstly, the scale of the visitor population of the large cultural institutions itself. Secondly, museums do not consider themselves operating in the broader and more customer-focused leisure, entertainment or hospitality environments.

As stated by EC1:

“Part of the problem is that they get 6 million visitors a year (British Museum) and 4 million of them are foreigners and then they don’t care. I think there’s another fundamental difference here, which is that retailers really care about their customers. Whereas museums, the big museums, four million visitors of theirs never come back again.”

EC1 did, however, recognise that some smaller museums can be and are more customer focused. However, EC1 also observed that regardless of size of the cultural institution, museums generally tend not to consider themselves in the leisure or hospitality industry, which does focus on the customer and the overall customer experience:

“The smaller museums are stretched. Some of the smaller museums, community museums do it really well and focus on customers. But they haven’t really learned that they’re in the hospitality industry. That culture and hospitality are not mutually exclusive.” (EC1)

A third reason why luxury retailers are more focused on the customer was identified by R6 who stated that in cultural institutions, higher importance is placed on the collection of artefacts or exhibition itself, rather than the customer experience. In addition, it was commented that museums might need to focus more on a genre, topic of exhibition or adhere to museum guidelines or policy:

“I guess in a sense when museums curate they have to think about the genre or the exhibition of what’s happening at that time, whereas we can be more broad, we can think about more things as a tie-in, I think they need to be much more focused on the topic. As much as we’re focused on the customer, we can offer many different price points and categories and products and images just by the nature of what we do.” (R6)

R1 also commented that there is a bigger focus on customer experience in luxury retail but commented that this stemmed from emotional empathy and delight felt by the curator or buyer when discovering new luxury brands (to sell as a MBLR) and wishing to create and share that feeling or emotion with existing or new customers:

“It’s almost trying to share the delight that the buyer feels when they meet a designer and they see a collection with people that you will then convert into customers because it’s communicating that delight.”

The finding that luxury retailer curation is observed to be more customer-focused suggests a connection to the finding in 6.1.5. that luxury retail curation is driven by the objective of increasing sales and delivering an experience for the customer. Also, the finding that the purpose of curation in luxury retail is to enable the luxury retailer to differentiate from competitors and elevate the status of products to support the customer experience, has also

been discussed in 6.1.6. However, curated content, for example, education, was also identified as a means of experience differentiation regarding knowledge, level of specialism and expertise in both the luxury retail and cultural institution environments. This theme finding is now reviewed.

6.1.8. Curation is About Education in Both Environments

The interviewees stated that a key shared step in the process of curation was continual research in order to educate customers and visitors in both luxury retail and cultural institution environments respectively.

The accumulation of knowledge by luxury retailers regarding new trends, cultural references and luxury lifestyle brands, was observed to be critical in order to offer a superior, differentiated brand experience. The proposition of offering something new and innovative was seen as educational to customers and observed to be a key driver in luxury retail. It was also commented that it would also influence consumption decisions.

“We keep looking and researching to see what customers want and try to influence them. I guess there is an element of education to it as well. Sometimes we want to move our customers on. It could be that for three seasons they’ve been buying the same thing. Then you’re like, okay, even though it’s been selling really well, we’ve got to move on now, it’s time to introduce something new and hopefully educate them to something new and expanding.” (R5)

From the cultural institution respondents’ perspective, the finding was that the accumulation of knowledge was a key objective, based on further developing and communicating expertise and a body of knowledge and educating the visitor.

“You educate and give a little bit to everybody. Layering of it, the education is really important. It can’t just be a one-layer thing. So the top layer is if you’re a complete novice and you don’t know anything about it. Then you put bits in for the people who are just hungry – who know about the subject and are just really hungry for more. In that sense it’s a process of education for all.” (C2)

In addition, the role of education was also identified to reinforce the brand of the cultural institution and a major contributor in attracting customers and increasing visitor numbers and ticket sales:

“Education gets you to buy into the brand. Our lectures get you to buy into the brand of the British Museum.” (C1)

The finding was therefore that in both environments, the research step in the curation process was to acquire knowledge that could be used as a source of differentiation. Views differed, however, regarding the type and depth of research, for example more visual-based research, e.g. mood board images of luxury goods/brands or data-driven, subject matter-focused historical research. For example, R1 recognised that the nature of research is different in the two environments and stated that research at Matchesfashion.com, whilst was not comparable to intense, academic research, was nonetheless rigorous in its own right. R1 also discussed that research in luxury retail is more practical, and also competitive, regarding the identification of something new to educate the customer:

"It's not as strictly academic in terms of the research, but the research is extremely practical. They look at it more competitively."

R6 also proposed that the research process in luxury retail differed to that in a cultural institution in that it is more visually-focused than historical-focused:

"I guess how a museum curator curates it's no different from how a designer curates, in effect that whenever we're starting a collection I might have an idea in mind. I would do a whole body of research around that and that research would be visual, rather than historical or fact based. That visual research is then edited to find common links amongst it and present a story for the season. Sometimes that story can be that all the links or products are different and that is the story. That there is no common bond. Or otherwise, it could be a common thread, you're trying to create a mood for the season and educate the customer."

However, C4 commented that the research step of curation with the objective of education was incomparable in the two environments. C4 felt strongly that the curator should be a specialist or expert in the specific field and hold a huge depth of knowledge about a subject matter. As referred to in Theme 5, C4 stated that without possession of this depth of knowledge, it was not really curating or educating:

"I think curating is now something you can study or practice as a discipline itself. Which again, I find – there's something suspect about that because ultimately, the curator needs to be an expert in order to educate. So to do a degree in curating or just do it, without understanding a subject, the implication is you don't really need to know that much about what you're curating because the skill is curating. I would argue that you need a huge depth of knowledge about those objects and the ideas before you come up with your concept, put them together, present them and educate."

RC1, however, acknowledged that the process of research and education are different in cultural institutions, recognized that the luxury fashion industry is educational in itself:

“Predominantly, museums are educational. I think the big fashion houses and retailers are going down that route, they want to be taken seriously and they probably deserve to be. That sounds patronizing and I don’t mean it to be. You know, fashion is a huge education industry.”

R3 also commented that whilst education may be an objective in luxury retail, it is more associated with experiences and entertainment and that museums are different as they have the time for deep research and to fully consider the education value. R3 also indicated that deep research and focus on education is less common in luxury retail as it is more fast-paced (as referred to in Theme 5.1.4.):

“I don’t think luxury brands or retailers are solely focusing on education, they’re more about entertaining. When I go to a museum, I see a lot of explanation and I feel there’s someone who’s reflected on this. When you look at a luxury shop window I don’t think someone has reflected on this as deeply. It’s more like I was following my instinct, trends or the mood of what I felt and just went for it. I didn’t question it, just thought this is a great idea, let’s do it. In the end, in retail it’s such limited time, everyone is doing things quickly. You don’t have time to really do deep research.”

This finding suggests that even though the steps of research and education in the curation process may be prime objectives in a cultural environment, and may differ in depth, pace and duration, the cultural environment may nonetheless share a goal with luxury retailers. This goal relates to the education of customers or visitors for a distinct purpose – to offer a differentiated experience to attract people and promote the curated collection.

6.1.9. Curation May Not Depend on Subject Matter Expertise

With regards to having prior knowledge of a subject matter in order to curate an experience, it was identified that in luxury retailing, a curator may not need to be an academic scholar or a subject matter expert, which was traditionally the case in the cultural institution environment.

It was observed that curation, in the context of a permanent collection, is based on subject matter expertise or academic scholarship as the permanent collection contains specific objects, which may be rare or unique, and belong to an institution. The level of specific knowledge and subject matter expertise regarding the permanent collection objects is different to that of curation in a temporary exhibition context, which does not own artefacts and focuses more on the design and development of an idea or theme or story (which may

involve temporary possession of objects), a curatorial point of view and the design and development of the overall experience.

In temporary exhibitions, it was also identified that curation means working across multiple disciplines and acquiring knowledge rather than already possessing it and being the in-house, resident expert and acting more as a custodian or theoretical expert. With regards to the rapid and selective acquisition of knowledge, the temporary exhibition type of curation was identified to relate more to that of luxury retail.

As stated by C5:

"I think curating is all sorts of different things for all sorts of different people. I've worked in very classical museums and I've worked in the Ashmolean and the V&A and I am used to high level, expert-based curation where people have done degrees in various things, including history of art, but not only history of art. But they've then done jobs which involve them working with collections, who feel that they have brought it to a high art and high perfection and they are then curators. I ended up at a certain point where I was managing all the curators in the V&A so I know what they're like. Basically, they were a rather sad collection of people who didn't know as much as they (thought they) did and spent a lot of time sort of bolstering themselves with being curators without actually having an original idea in their heads. I spent a lot of my time battling with curators to try and get them to think about what is the collection for? Isn't it for the public? It's got public money so shouldn't we actually try and explain it or why we're making it so that nobody can understand? Why don't we make the labels intelligible? Why don't we make it so that it's a joy to come in rather than actually put people off? I was very much part of a group of people who were trying to look at curating being storytelling, not just sticking objects in cases which the British Museum does given a half a chance."

"Curators in museums can be I would say incredibly blinkered about the outside world and very determined to see their world as rarified and important and they would like to see commercial business as a sort of dreadful thing that they want nothing to do with." (C5)

However, C5 pointed out that curation in the context of temporary exhibitions is different:

"The skillset of the curator of a permanent collection and a temporary exhibition is completely different – they're actually chalk and cheese and the trouble is that the curators who are curating a collection very often don't know enough about the exhibition side because they may, if you're in the V&A, only do one exhibition your entire career. The other interesting thing about curators of collections is that they've quite often got no visual sense, they're more

concerned with the objects. They don't necessarily think about what things look like or can be experienced."

"Curating exhibitions has always very different, there's curating when you've got a permanent collection, then there's curating when you've got a temporary exhibition, which is more about what you're thinking about with luxury retail. Curation of exhibitions has been far more interesting for far long and there are more curators who have tried to make exhibitions essentially a narrative and an experience, and that's important." (C5)

C2 also agreed that permanent collection curators are not focused on the overall experience due to the fact that they are often academic experts in the subject matter:

"You find so many curators who aren't curators, actually, they're academics. So they've written loads of books on a subject or about objects and because they've written loads of books, they think they're the expert and they can be a curator, but it doesn't really work like that."

In addition, C2 commented that as temporary exhibitions do not have permanent collections, as curators they do not need to be subject matter experts, instead experts at curating immersive experiences:

"We aren't a museum so we don't have a permanent collection that we're trying to get the world to know more about. We've got nothing for people to learn apart from the things and experiences we offer here. The whole point of an exhibition is you're physically there and you can see and you can smell and you can move through a narrative. There's no point sticking up loads of pictures on walls or objects on plinths with big, fat captions, which I have to say is what the V&A does on the whole. We create a really immersive experience. That's what it should be about. You shouldn't have to read too much and you shouldn't have to struggle to understand. You should get it by osmosis." (C2)

C2 also observed that the acquisition of knowledge concerning new and diverse concepts is a similar process also found in luxury retail and one that has traditionally been looked down upon by permanent cultural institution curators:

"Curators at Somerset House are quite a different kind of curator. They are very knowledgeable but they do such a diverse role like in retail. It's not like when you speak to the Fashion Director at the V&A who traditionally used to be very snobby about retail because you get some curators there who are much more narrow and specialized in their fields. That's when it is very different. Curators at Somerset House may not be an expert on half the things

they've done there but they have to learn to be. They apply that knowledge and that understanding to things." (C2)

The perspective that a temporary exhibition curator acquires knowledge to develop a distinct viewpoint, as opposed to being recognized as an existing subject matter scholarly expert, was also identified by C3, who also focuses on temporary exhibitions, therefore, similar to that in Somerset House:

"In a more traditional conventional museum, you become a custodian of a set of objects, you feed into policy of strategy about collecting in the contemporary sense and how that fits in the collecting policy of the museum previously. You are some sort of scholar of those artefacts. Then it's likely you will, on occasion, make displays or exhibitions including those artefacts or around the period or around the subject of that particular collection. That's a very different curator role to the one I play. I very often have a very broad spectrum of knowledge over a set of disciplines over a fairly expansive time period. When I'm making a show, you have to turn your attention to a period of history that you may be familiar with but you have to become reasonably scholarly. Then how you tell a story about the subject that you're focusing on is the guiding principle." (C3)

"What we try to do here is always take a new perspective on a subject matter. As an exhibition maker, curation for me is about staging and it's about crafting a narrative that communicates, it's about researching, editing and communicating if you want to reduce it." (C3)

Therefore, one of the key differences identified between the traditional museum form of curation and temporary exhibition curation was knowledge. The wide-spanning acquisition and application of knowledge in exhibition curation, often relating to an over-arching theme rather than objects per se, rather than already possessing existing expert knowledge in museum curation, appeared to be a key differentiator between permanent and temporary exhibition or collection curation. In addition, it was observed that temporary exhibition curation was similar to that observed in luxury retail as it depended on rapid acquisition of knowledge and application of that knowledge to create a distinct point of view and deliver an immersive experience.

6.1.10. Financial Considerations that Influence Curation

It was identified that the nature of curation may also be influenced by financial considerations. From a cultural institution perspective, it refers to the funding that is received, which dictates the number and scale of productions or exhibitions. From a luxury retail perspective, seasonal sales objectives and predictions also influence the buy, the edit and the art of display.

As stated by R6:

“The difference in curation is that in retail the whole process isn’t in a bubble. There are other things that come into play in the curation process, that editing process, such as best-selling, best-performing colours; requests from the public, the shopfloor. Things that haven’t sold or performed well in the past, historical analysis of sales figures and data, which is maybe different in the museum world. There’s also an element of second guessing in retail, is it right for the company, will it make money, will we sell a lot of these?”

R5 also commented on how commercial retail objectives influence the curation process in luxury retail as they influence curatorial decision-making:

“I suppose there is a very strong commercial imperative which skews the curation process slightly. The buyers and merchandisers might have more fun if there were just able to curate and say, well, I love that, this is my view.”

However, despite the awareness and focus in luxury retail to meet commercial objectives, it was identified that both types of environment face financial influences as stated by R6:

“I think that there are financial constraints on both unless you are truly independent. Both need to sell. Museums and luxury retailers are also bound by the same restriction at the end of the day which is that you have to make money in order to continue what you’re doing, so there is an element of selling in both. You can’t do art or make beautiful fashion design in a vacuum. Sometimes you have to do something you know will sell – tickets or products. Sometimes you have to do a blockbuster exhibition. Obviously, you would expect the retailer’s focus is a bit more heavily weighted on the commercial side, but there are still parallels.”

In addition, it was identified that the focus on customer and, therefore sales, may also be less of a restriction on curatorial practices than in a cultural institution, that focuses purely on a specific genre or theme, as the luxury retailer has other opportunities:

“I guess in a sense when museums curate they have to think about the genre or the exhibition theme, whereas we can be more broad, we can think about more things as a tie-in, I think they need to be much more focused on the topic. As much as we’re focused on the customer, we can offer many different price points and categories and products and experiences just by the nature of what we do.”

Acknowledgement that both cultural institutions and luxury retailers have financial objectives is understood. However, to what degree the financial arrangements and scope restricts curatorial practices has received limited coverage in the literature. It does suggest that therefore this may benefit from further research and examination in the literature.
In summary, in the findings it is observed that there is no one simple definition of the term "curation" despite it being a popular term used in various ways within the luxury retail environment. Several perspectives regarding what constitutes curation today were observed, for example, the perspective held by museum curators or museum professionals who still associate curation with scholarship and expert theoretical knowledge. A second perspective observed was held by the temporary exhibition curators who believe curation refers to the researching and development of ideas and concepts to generate experiences. The third perspective proposed was by the luxury retailers, who believe curation is concerned with creating and enhancing brand experiences. In light of these differing perspectives regarding curation, it is now time to review how curation is understood and interpreted specifically within the luxury retail organisation.

6.2. Theme 6 – Curation in Luxury Retail

Two key findings were identified in Theme 6 and refer to how curation as an activity and a formal, strategic objective impacts the entire luxury retail organisation, including the design and development of brand experience. The first finding, the "Influence of Curation Across the Luxury Retail Organisation", identified that curation influences the wider organisation through a number of different ways, including:

- leadership ownership of curatorial activity
- a formal organisational guidepost or objective
- curation of trends that transform into brand experiences delivered by teams throughout the organisation
- a type of criteria in recruitment assessment and evaluation

6.2.1. The Influence of Curation Across the Luxury Retail Organisation

This theme refers to how curation, as an activity and also a strategic objective, was identified to impact the entire luxury retail organization as a means of differentiation.

R1 stated that the combined activities of “edit and curation” is one of the organisation’s five “pillars”, described as a CEO-led, organization-wide objective with curation direction distilled down through the organisation from the top, influencing all departments:

“Edit and curation is one of our pillars. Anything that becomes a pillar for us, we actually talk about how that touches every department.”
“Whenever we’re making any decisions in the business, do they come back and hit these goals, so curation is one of them. So, whenever we’re doing something, we come back and go, does that tick that? Is that fulfilling the brief somehow. For us it’s very interesting because it is that thing where it’s come back to focus and you kind of have to go, is it curated? It keeps everyone on track. So it’s more like checkpoints to bring everyone back when there’s so many opportunities that it can be quite easy to dilute.” (R1)

R1 also commented that curatorial activity starts at the top of the organisation. R1 stated that the CEO is the lead “curator” indicating that it was recognized as a senior role and responsibility. In addition, that the curation direction is distilled down through the organisation from the top, suggesting there is a top-down dissemination of curation influence. In addition, the editorial department was identified to also focus strongly on curation as it had to create stories and content to support the curated offer online, in physical stores and storytelling.

Another identified form of curation that manifests itself across the organization was related to the curation of ideas and brand concepts. R4 stated that curation in Selfridges goes beyond that of curating a collection of brands or products, rather, the curation of trends and concepts is the core influence that directs the brand experience across the entire organisation of Selfridges:

“We curate trends I guess. We have our finger on the pulse of the zeitgeist globally. It’s really big picture cultural stuff. We pick up trends and we turn them into ideas we feel are best suited to the brand and message that Selfridges wants to get out there. Then we keep everybody in creation direction aware of all of these things and we sieve stuff. So we sieve out the things we think are relevant and good and strong trends that fit us and our brand.” (R4)

R4 stated that once the curated brand concepts and brand experiences for the year are developed, organization-wide symposiums take place where the concepts are introduced, the board approves and delivery teams are briefed regarding implementation:

“Then they (the curated brand concepts) get embedded in everyone in these big creative symposiums that we do and help everyone understand the direction. The second stage of the creative direction cycle is it gets developed into a proper concept. You have to get everyone’s

buy-in. We can't brief concepts out until every single person on the board agrees. They have to engage with it as I have to engage with them. Then when they are approved, that gets briefed out to all the key delivery people in the business so everyone from buying and merchandising to window displays, our website, online, this tool, all product development." (R4)

A further example of how curation influences the organization was given from a multi-luxury brand retailer, R5, in that it influences recruitment decisions. It was commented on that the ability to curate in luxury retail is important and hiring customer facing sales staff is not just about sales ability. It suggests that retailers must know how to curate a mix of brands, and be able to develop a concept on the shopfloor that is transferable across other retail channels and customer touchpoints:

"Whenever I hire anyone you know where they've worked and the shopfloor is your CV at the end of the day. I definitely look at how they've curated their buyer mix. You have to respect that each store is different, so I may not like what's in the store because their customers are so different to ours. It's how they put it together or curate it, how it flows and what they put alongside another. It's just so that it makes sense rather than there being a random mix of brands. I would definitely research into that." (R5)

In light of the differing types of influence of curation across the organisation, attention is turned the next finding regarding the role of the curator within the organisation.

6.2.2. The Role of a Curator in Luxury Retail

Theme 6 refers to how the respondents understood and described the nature of the role of the curator in the luxury retail environment. In addition, how respondents interpretations differed by the type of luxury retailer and type of organisation, including:

- differences identified between the creative director and the curator
- similar responsibilities of the buyer and the curator
- differences regarding the type and order of focus of the curator role: development of brand concepts, design of visual identity and delivery of experiences
- the role of the curator being an individual one versus a team role
- the similarity of the luxury retail curator to a temporary exhibition curator

Various "curator" roles were identified to exist in the luxury retail environment. It was observed that different titles are used and manifestations of the role of the curator in luxury retail also differ, for example, as one key person, the creative or visual identity director, or,

multiple people all contributing to the curation process. It was also identified that curatorial roles differed between the sole luxury brand retailer and the multi luxury brand retailer.

R7 commented that the curator is the key person who is responsible for driving the brand, yet the creative director and curator are often identified as the same person due to a need in today's society to have one key figurehead representing a brand:

"I think the sad truth is that society as such is now – it's so celebrity driven and needs to have a name and one person to look at. But, in reality, the name "creative director" tends to be one below the brand. The "curator" tends to have a reputation of driving the brand."

R7 made the distinction that the creative director is acting as the day-to-day compass of the brand, making sure all is on point and consistent with the brand positioning and identity. The curator, on the other hand, is seen as the editor, the selector and the producer of the overall narrative and experience, and storyteller.

"Rem Koolhaas was more of a curator in a way than an creative director, although his title was creative director.[25] But generally speaking, the creative director who sits on a permanent basis within a branded organization will need to make sure that from top to bottom everything follows the mission statement. Everything is coming from the same place. Everything is making a clear statement of personality, positioning and everything." (R7)

The comment that there is one person who focuses on driving forward and ensuring the consistency of the brand experience across a sole luxury retail store is similar to the comments made by R2, working for a multi luxury brand retailer. Despite R2 claiming that she curated every day, instead of self-naming as a "creative director" or "curator", preferred to use the metaphorical term "conductor" due to connecting multiple luxury brands together visually to create one unified and consistent brand experience:

"I'm more of a conductor. I make the noise happen or tell people to play at the same time. Because if you imagine this building is an orchestra, all of the different people in this building are part of that orchestra. As the conductor, I'm influencing everything – the designing of brand experience, every single bit of it. I create the house with all of the multiple brands to sit there alongside each other."

R1 also commented that there is one person who is driving the brand and brand experience. However, R1 stated that curation starts from another part of the luxury retail organization, not on visual identity, but rather editing or buying first and then trickles down throughout the entire organization regarding the context of the edit. R1 commented that there are two parts of

[25] Rem Koolhaas is a renowned architect and retail designer of luxury retail stores, including global Prada stores

curation, firstly, the edit and selection and then secondly, the presentation of the edit, but that it starts with one person, the buyer and their edit:

"Curation would start within the business as buying, therefore by the buyer or curator. We consider editing and buying to be part of our DNA and probably our biggest point of difference as a luxury retailer that's now global. It's the edit, so that's curation. So it's about selection. Then the curation process goes further, really. So, it starts with the literal way of the edit, the selection of the product, then it goes into the context with which we show and display it, which would be taking curation quite in its literal form of what you do in a museum. I think that's two sides of curation – one is selection and one is about context and presentation. "

However, similar to the comments made by R2, R1 identified that once the edit or selection has been set by the buyer, the buyer's edit or selection then influences all elements of the brand experience:

"So, like I say, it all starts with the buyer and that very much directs then all the other, how we'll play everything else in the season, from what events we'll do to what we'll write about in our magazine, to what will be the focus of the stories online and the treatment of it as well. A lot of it comes down to that mood, really feeling separates or the fact that there's a new silhouette. That will then set, absolutely, a tone across the entire site and the boutiques for a season."

The importance of the role of the buyer as the curator was also commented on by EC1. It was mentioned that today in the luxury retail environment, Joan Burstein, the owner and chief buyer of Browns Fashion, a multi luxury brand retailer, would be called a curator due to her ability to identify, select and edit:[26]

"Joan would be called a curator today. But she had a wonderful eye and was an amazing buyer. She discovered Missoni, she discovered Calvin Klein. She bought McQueen's first degree show. She discovered Galliano, at degree shows. So you could call her a curator but in the Marks & Spencer's terminology, she's a buyer. An incredibly good buyer. " (EC1)
The example that different terminology would be used to describe Joan Burstein's role today, referencing the description of her role from the sole brand retailer Marks and Spencer's perspective as a "buyer", but as a "curator" in today's multi luxury retail brand environment, suggests that roles within the retail environment may have evolved. In addition, it may suggest that the term "curator" does not yet possess a clear definition and consequently, is

[26] http://www.vogue.co.uk/news/2015/05/12/farfetch-buys-browns-london-boutique-sold Browns Fashion was sold to Farfetch on May 12th 2015 with the objective of "pioneering a mix of technology and in-store experience" (Accessed 21.9.15)

used in multiple different ways within the retail environment, be it luxury or high street, sole or multi brand retailer.

The focus and order of curatorial activity also differed, with three different luxury retailer perspectives observed. As outlined previously, R2 stated that curation starts with visual identity, R1 commented that curation starts with editing or buying first and then trickles down throughout the entire organization regarding the context of the edit. The third perspective was provided by R4 who commented that curation starts with the development of trends into concepts, as managed and led by the Creative Director, and that they then are embedded as forms of brand experiences, influencing all parts of the organization, including the buyers and visual identity teams:

“We curate the trends, they then get embedded in everyone and briefed out to all the delivery people. When these stages are done, we would go and brief the buyers. It’s really honed down into this really tight package. Then they will be briefed on that as a group and given a sort of pack, a creative pack that they cascade down to their teams of buyers. Windows, visual merchandising teams, special projects, installation teams and all of that stuff get the same process. They all get briefed and given tools and stuff.” (R4)

R4 also commented on how the creative team, led by the Creative Director, ensures the curated concepts are fully implemented in the organization to deliver the desired brand experience and bring the concepts to life in the required way:

“We do a lot of things that guide people. We do lots of handbooks, there’s a brand handbook that explains it and ridiculous imagery, mad quotes and stuff, but it’s the way we measure how well it is embedded, also sales as a direct result too.”

The difference in the process and type of curatorial activity within the organisation was also observed to be influenced by a number of factors, including, for example, the different size of the organisation, shape of the store layout, the importance placed on various functions within each organisation to lead, design, develop and deliver the brand experience and even the brand identity and ideology.

R2 commented on how Liberty was a “beast” selling so many brands, yet the limited and unconventional store layout with many small rooms and areas meant that curatorial decisions were complex and the overall Liberty brand experience had to be “anchored” by the curation of the Liberty philosophy and brand:

“We’re being highly challenged by our Managing Director to be more literal with the brand. There’s a level of standard that needs to come up across the whole building in every room.

There's a language and a pattern to the way that you do things that needs to be built for each room. You have to think about it room by room. I have a whole team of people to do that on a daily basis."

R1 also commented that the brand ideology or philosophy, coupled with the small physical size of Matchesfashion.com meant that the key focus would continue to be editorial curation:

"For us we will always retain that luxury lifestyle boutique sensibility which is more about curation at the heart of it. I mean, it comes back to the fact that if you've got a very small footprint, you have to be really curated and that's the difference. Now, obviously, we have the opportunity online, but it's still maintaining that kind of philosophy about the edit being first and foremost."

However, regardless of organizational size, store layout or brand ideology or philosophy, all of the three MBLRs stated that once the curation direction is set, by either the buyer or the Creative Director or "conductor", it becomes an organizational-wide process where multiple people are involved in curation of the brand experience.

Further, it was also recognised the role of the curator represents many people and teams, who are networked or dependent upon one another, including: designers, sales associates, creative teams and visual merchandisers. The existence of a team of networked people has similarities with the nature of exhibition curation, which comprises of many people with different skills and not one omnipotent person.

R7 stated that in luxury retail many people are contributing to the curation process of the design and development of brand experience:

"I tell you who's a perfect example of this is Selfridges. They're not really museum curators but they tend to use artists that are art directors, stylists, set designers, visionaries. They have in their time done some incredible concepts."

R4 also agreed that the role of the curator represents many people when implementing and spoke about the network of different curatorial roles that support the design, development and delivery of brand experience:

"I've got a research manager who specializes quite a bit in fashion and she helps with developing seasonal ideas in the verbal sense so she's quite a communicator. She will draw together lots of imagery that she feels is relevant and really pad it out and make it legible. Whereas I am more conceptual pie in the sky. We also have a designer who makes it into

something amazing to be able to transform into a brand communication tool essentially. Then also various other people, researchers and staff."

R3 also identified that the role of curation is the responsibility of many different people:

"The curation in store is the responsibility of various sets of people. You've got your sales associates, your dedicated visual merchandisers…it varies what needs to be done too."

Respondents working in cultural institutions also agreed that many people in a team have different curatorial roles and that there is seldom one person doing everything:

"It's a real team effort, I would say. It can be a long-drawn out process and it's obviously not just me. So you work with people who know the subject back to front and inside out. You work with designers who come up with – can help you work out how you walk through the space, how you experience it all, that kind of thing." (C2)

C5 agreed that the role of the curator in reality is made up of many people contributing:

"There's a tendency for people to use the word curation to be a sort of catch all on the idea that again you've got this omnipotent person who can do it all, but in reality there aren't that many people who can do it all. You usually need a team with people with different skills that you fit together."

In addition, C5 discussed that in luxury retail, the role of the curator is similar to exhibition curation due to a similar emphasis on the focus and process of editing, storytelling, the art of display and the immediacy of an experience in both luxury retail and an exhibition:

"Because of these factors, the definition of the role of the curator from a retail perspective is based on exhibition design and exhibition curation, I would say."

The finding of how the role of the curator in luxury retail is similar to or able to be compared with a temporary exhibition curator is now examined.

6.3. Theme 7 – Temporary Exhibition Curation and Brand Experience

This theme is concerned with the respondents understanding of how temporary exhibition curatorial activities are similar to those in luxury retailing. The similarities identified referred to the design and development of an immersive experience that had a limited lifespan, due to the temporary or seasonal nature of a project or installation, and also the ability to rapidly

research and acquire relevant knowledge and apply it to a curated concept. It was identified that the focus on designing and developing an experience and also the skill-set were different from that a permanent collection curator, who already possesses an in-depth knowledge and scholarly expertise about a specific subject matter.

6.3.1. Temporary Exhibition Curation is Similar to Luxury Retail Curation

Temporary exhibition curators stated that there were many parallels between curation in luxury retail and temporary exhibitions. The first similarity refers to designing and developing innovative and immersive experiences that have a beginning, a start date, and a finish date. As stated by C5:

"Curating exhibitions has always been very different, there's curating when you've got a permanent collection, then there's curating when you've got a temporary exhibition, which is more about what you're thinking about with luxury retail. Most people want to go to (temporary) exhibitions because they want that immediacy. They want to see and experience something that's got a beginning, a start date, and a finish date, that'll get them there. They want to focus on the experience as well as the story."

A second similarity referred to was that temporary exhibition experiences are much like a luxury brand or magazine with high production values, an editorial eye, a tone of voice; with one temporary exhibition curator even stating that they wanted to offer a luxury brand experience:

"The way I see it is that we're like a luxury brand or magazine, an interesting magazine that covers a lot of subjects. It's like having a very editorial eye. So I think we'd like to think we have a tone of voice, like a luxury brand or magazine. I think we're very, very concerned with production values. So everything has to be very high quality really. We like to provoke ideas and like exhibitions to have a curatorial point of view. We get 2.5 million people a year but we don't want any more than that. We don't want to be populist and Covent Garden. We want to have a luxury brand experience." (C2)

A third similarity commented on was that, like the design and development of luxury retail brand experiences, planning and programming of concepts may be fluid and opportunistic during considerable research period to curate new concepts and turn them into experiences. The similarity observed related to how both luxury retailers and temporary exhibition curators focus on tapping into the zeitgeist, identifying new concepts and trends in an opportunistic manner:

“A lot of the programming is opportunistic. We undertake considerable research and sift new concepts and trends, what is interesting and we do exhibitions that could have gone elsewhere but they wouldn’t have because they don’t have the imagination and skills to do it properly. We have a programme with all of our different exhibition spaces and what’s going on in them and it always just shifts. It’s very fluid and immediate like retail.” (C2)

This comment is similar to that stated by R4 regarding the need to be open to new opportunities that may arise and form the basis of a new concept and consequently, a new in-store installation, exhibition or experience:

“It’s constant. You can’t stop. We do all the fashion weeks every season, we do all the biennales in the main months, so Berlin, Venice, all of those, even Folkestone Triennial. We go to all the big festivals, theatre festivals in the top 10 galleries, we do peripheral research constantly. We pick up patterns and we take the ideas and turn them into concepts and then experiences in store.” (R4)

A fourth similarity identified refers to that comparable curatorial processes exist and that they are not necessarily individually driven but rather team-focused. For example, it was observed that many curatorial roles in luxury retail are the equivalent of temporary exhibition designers and curators due to the focus on concept development, selection and curation of objects or products, storytelling and the design of physical spaces to enable customers or visitors have immersive experiences. As stated by C5:

“I think there are the same processes going on so I think this business of selection, editing, thinking about what you’re trying to say with what you’ve got and then actually presenting it is all – it’s all there. Whether it’s one person doing it or a team of people doing it, I would always push towards a team rather than a single mind because you want people with quite different ways of looking at it to make it hang together. I think a lot of curatorial roles in retail are the equivalent of the exhibition designer and curator.”

C2 also commented on the similarity of processes delivered by a team rather than an individual curator:

“Things like editing and curating and delivering an experience share a lot of the same things in the retail or exhibition world and are undertaken by a team of people”

In light of the similar approaches taken in the design and development of brand experience, it was also observed that some of the curatorial skillsets were similar too. These findings are now reviewed.

6.3.2. Similarity of Curatorial Skills of Exhibition Curators and Luxury Retail Curators

Several areas regarding the skillsets of exhibition curators and luxury retail curators were identified as being similar. Two examples commented on and observed were firstly, developing an edit, telling a story and creating an experience, and secondly, that both curators possess the skills to rapidly acquire and apply knowledge and develop concepts with distinct points of view.

However, it was recognised that regarding the research element of the curation process, it may not be as academic in focus, as stated by R1:

“Exhibition curation skills are not dissimilar to retail curation skills. They’re looking at the reference points to create the edit, the story and the narrative.”

In addition, a further similarity identified related to both curators in luxury retail and temporary exhibitions not necessarily being a custodian or scholar of a set of objects (as associated with a permanent collection curator) but rather being knowledgeable about the environment, how to research and learn quickly and deeply about a subject matter, apply a new perspective or angle regarding the subject matter and create a story and experience.

As stated by C3:

“In a traditional museum you become a custodian of a set of objects, you feed into policy of strategy about collecting in the contemporary sense and how that fits with the collecting policy of the museum previously. You are some sort of scholar of those artefacts. Then it’s likely you will, on occasion, make displays or exhibitions including those artefacts or around the period or around the subject of that particular collection. That’s a very different curator role to the one I play. I very often have a very broad spectrum of knowledge over a set of disciplines over a fairly expansive time period. When I’m making a show you have to turn your attention to a period of history that you may be familiar with but you have to become reasonably scholarly. Then how you tell a story about the subject that you’re focusing on is the guiding principle.”

“What we try to do here is always take a new perspective on a subject matter. As an exhibition maker, curation for me is about staging and it’s about crafting a narrative that communicates, it’s about researching, editing and communicating if you want to reduce it.” (C3)

C2 also agreed that curators of exhibitions have a very diverse focus and need to learn and apply knowledge quickly, similar to luxury retailing:

“Curators at Somerset House are quite a different kind of curator. They are very knowledgeable but they do such a diverse role like in retail. It’s not like when you speak to the Fashion Director at the V&A who traditionally used to be very snobby about retail because you get some curators there who are much more narrow and specialized in their fields. That’s when it is very different. Curators at Somerset House may not be an expert on half the things they’ve done there but they have to learn to be. They apply that knowledge and that understanding to things.”

The finding that there are recognised similarities between the skills required for exhibition curation and luxury retail curation leads on to the third Findings Chapter, which examines the key curatorial activities, different forms of curation and curatorial roles across the luxury retailers observed today.

Chapter 7. Findings Chapter Three: Themes 8-9

This findings chapter focuses on how curation is manifested and brought to life in luxury retailing in the design and development of brand experience, including the identification of types of curatorial activities, forms of curation and curatorial roles.

Findings in Theme 8 highlight the respondents understanding of how curation is defined and manifested in its various forms in luxury retailing. It was recognised that the term “curation” is a popular term in industry and one that may be used as a means of differentiation to enhance the value and type of brand experience in luxury retail. In addition, it was observed that it is evolving with a shift from the traditional art-historian association to many new forms of curation being established relating to specific disciplines and activities. It was also recognised that unlike traditional art-historian curation, scholarly, subject matter expertise and knowledge was no longer required in order to be defined as a curator or engage in curatorial practices.

A further finding was that that the nature of curation may also be influenced by financial considerations. From a cultural institution perspective, it refers to the level of funding that is received, which dictates the scale and nature of curated productions or exhibitions. From a luxury retail perspective, however, short-term, seasonal sales objectives and predictions influence the buy, the edit and the art of display, key curatorial practices that were identified in luxury retail.

In addition, seven key curatorial activities were observed across the different types of luxury retailer. The seven different curatorial activities were further analysed in the context of findings sections 1 and 2, and four types of curation in luxury retail were identified: brand curation, editorial curation, physical curation and relational curation.

This findings section also is concerned with Theme 9, curatorial roles in the luxury retail environment. It was observed that different types of curatorial roles exist within the sole luxury retail brand organisation and the multi luxury brand retail organisation and vary according to the size, scope and brand positioning of the luxury retailer.

The findings are presented and discussed below.

7.1. Theme 8 – Typology of Curation

7.1.1. Seven Key Curatorial Activities in Luxury Retailing

In light of the various different perspectives regarding curation, the findings were further analysed by examining the different words used by the interviewees when describing curation and curatorial activities. Key descriptor words were identified in NVivo as themes and placed in a framework in order to identify and compare cross-interviewee definitions. The curatorial activities were numbered in the order that the respondents described them and the process of curation within their organisations.

It was observed that different luxury retailers emphasised some curatorial activities than others, depending on the nature and type of role in the organisation (findings regarding curatorial roles is referenced in Theme 9). A summary of the identified seven curatorial activities in the luxury retail environment may be observed in Appendix 5.

7.1.1.1. Research

Research was identified as a critical step in the curation process in the luxury retail environment to identify new ideas and themes of brand experiences.

As stated by R4:

“I’m out in the world looking at everything, soaking it all up and that’s from fashion to art to music to anything you can think of really. Then we pick up patterns from that and trends and turn them into ideas that we feel are best suited to the brand and message that Selfridges wants to get out there.”

It was also identified that it was not strictly academic based research, but rather more practical, as commented on by R1:

“The research is extremely practical. They’re out on markets seeing 400 brands, now four times a year sometimes.”

It was also found to be time-restricted due to the fast-paced nature and short-term, seasonal commercial objectives of the luxury retail environment. Finally, it was also commented that the nature of the research was broad and often included multiple cultural and creative reference points to feed into the idea and concept development step of the curatorial process.

7.1.1.2. Filtering Ideas and Developing Concepts

The filtering ideas and developing of patterns and trends into concepts was identified in the research as an early and fundamental step in the curation process which related to identifying which ideas and developed concepts would represent an optimum fit and enhancement of the existing brand identity or position or offer new opportunities for further brand differentiation.

Words such as “editing”, “championing” and “sieving” the ideas were identified in the context that the brand identity of the luxury retailer itself was the key defining factor upon which filtering depended on. In the case of the multi-luxury brand retailer it was also identified that this stage referred to the filtering of brands in the buying process.

As stated by R4:

“Working for a brand like Selfridges, it’s a totally different kind of curation because you’re sieving – the sieve is Selfridges. So you’re not curating based on necessarily a pure idea, it’s the idea and Selfridges or (the idea) is filtered through the brand.”

It was also observed by R4 that the process of sieving might pose the question of whether the Selfridges team who are curating concepts are really curators with a third party point of view on the world that they are offering to the public, or whether they are just curators of the luxury retail brand itself, developing and producing brand content. When asked which one R4 might be, the answer was “brand curator” due to the focus on the design and development of concepts that will reinforce the Selfridges brand and brand experience:

“We sieve out all the things we think are relevant and good and strong trends that fits us. Each one of the ideas will be taken and developed. We have a calendar for the year and it’s always filled with creative concepts right the way through. Our experience ideas have background information, properly written concepts, ideas to prove the point, how it would look like in the store, the graphics, everything.” (R4)

7.1.1.3. Acquiring Knowledge

Following the development of ideas into concepts, acquisition of knowledge to further develop the edited idea and concept was identified as a key step. It was observed that acquisition of knowledge occurred frequently through different roles within the luxury retail organization such as the buyer and their ‘four-times a year’ buying trips. In addition, that knowledge was gained through listening to feedback.

R1 describes research, having ideas and acquiring knowledge as important initial steps in the process of curation:

“First of all, to get out there and make sure they research and see everything. From that, I also mean globally. Equally to engage with international clients and get feedback and with editors and press as well, who are obviously at the top of the tree in terms of opinion formers and the people you are trying to present that curation to first”

In addition, knowledge was also acquired from external parties, such as designers, artists and other creative professionals to further enhance and strengthen the curated concept.

“They’re having conversations with designers, they are visiting their studios. They’re looking at cultural things that tie into that. They’re looking at creative reference points.” (R1)

It was also identified that interaction with creative external parties was also a way of acquiring knowledge and measuring the value of ideas and concepts:

“We got invited to do something by LIFT, the International Festival of Theatre in the Royal Academy. We met the creative director and it turns out they have exactly the same idea as us. That’s another way of measuring. You think okay, that’s bit of a barometer check.”

7.1.1.4. Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View

Development of a formalised concept, a distinct point of view or seasonal edit of multiple brands was identified as an important step in the curatorial process in luxury retail. The outcome of this activity was identified to be a unique edit that would differentiate the luxury retailers. It was also identified that it is undertaken again by a variety of roles, for example the buyer, creative director and editor of brand communications.

In the case of a SBLR, this curatorial activity relates to the development of a specific theme that influences the design of a collection. In the case of the MBLR, it refers to the buyer, following considerable research, editing a collection of multi-luxury brands to form a seasonal edit. For both types of luxury retailer, it was observed that this curatorial activity also included the edit of brand communications to support the theme of the collection or the edited multi brand buy.

It was identified in the research that multiple roles exist that are responsible for edit-related curatorial activity. However, it was consistently likened to editor in a magazine: hand picking things that communicate a story around a subject, extracting from research a narrative and arranging the work to communicate the tale they want to tell.

As stated by R2:

“A good curator is also a very good editor”

This understanding and interpretation of the role was also echoed by R6:

“I think a curator is somebody who basically is like an editor. Almost like an editor in a magazine. They’re trying to communicate a story based around a subject”

R7 was also in agreement regarding the importance of the role of the editor:

“One of the most interesting movements I think is going on is the role of the editor. Because that in a way is absolutely the most important thing”

Finally, as outlined in Theme 6, The Influence of Curation Across the Luxury Retail Organisation, R1 concurred by stating that:

“We consider editing and buying to be part of our DNA and probably our biggest point of different as a luxury retailer that’s now global. It’s the edit, so that’s curation.”

Finally, the editor was identified as an important role with regards to the design and development of brand experience outside of the store, for example, online and social media.

7.1.1.5. Art of Display

The art of display refers to the design of the presentation and display of products and installation of the curated concept to create a brand experience. It was noted that this is relevant for both online and in-store, but tends to relate more to the luxury store environment, as the luxury store was recognised as becoming the key physical, multi-sensory brand touch point and the arena in which brand experiences come to life. The key objective of the art of display in a curatorial sense was identified to bring the curated concept to life through the physical touch points of the brand, such as product displays and installations, and to support the story or narrative.

Two physical types of curatorial practices were observed to relate to the tangible manifestation of the brand experience. Firstly, the selection and arrangement of the products themselves, product curation, and secondly, the display of those products, display curation. Both were observed to support the brand concept narrative and help to deliver the brand experience.

Respondents commented that product curation referred to the selection and arrangement of luxury products. Curation of the space where the products are was referred to as display curation and was identified as the stage, the architecture, the layout and the interior design of the luxury retailer store, within which the brand experience takes place. From an online perspective, this was referred to as the aesthetics of the website and how the brand experience is consistently delivered between the store and website. These two curatorial practices are now reviewed.

Regarding product curation, or the selection and arrangement of products, was referred to by cultural institution professionals as "visual merchandising" and they questioned why the term curation is used to replace visual merchandising. [27] A number of respondents thought that the usage of the term curation in the luxury retail context is observed to be a pretentious way of defining visual merchandising, described as arranging products in a way that attracted consumers. It was commented on that the reason why the usage of the term was perceived to be pretentious and without merit, was due to visual merchandisers not contributing any form of intellectual theory or knowledge by the permanent collection curator.

Both luxury retailers and exhibition curators, however, did not reference the arrangement of products or objects solely as visual merchandising or claim that they are attempting to add theoretical value, but rather experiential value for the customer or visitor. Both referenced the arrangement of products as part of the role of visual merchandising to create an installation space which is both theatrical and entertaining and, most importantly, an experience, providing experiential and entertainment value. It was observed that visual merchandising plays a part in product curation but the curation of a brand experience goes beyond visual merchandising. It was also commented on that this is where the two worlds of exhibition experience design and luxury retail experience design meet.

As stated by R1:

"If you are going to make your customers come to something physical, it's really about giving them a bit of theatre, a bit of entertainment. The physical experience is becoming more and more like an installation."

"This is where I think the parallel between exhibitions and fashion lies. It's really about trying to share the delight that the buyer feels when they first meet a designer and see a collection because you're using visual merchandising and the art of display as you would in an

[27] According to the Business Dictionary.com, visual merchandising is defined as: "the use and manipulation of attractive sales displays and retail floor plans to engage customers and boost sales activity." Source: http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/visual-merchandising.html Accessed: 21.9.15

exhibition too, to communicate and hopefully, share that delight and insight and create an experience." (R1)

In addition, it was commented that the arrangement or display of products cannot be just something beautiful but requires more depth as it needs to be something customers can experience:

As stated by R2:

"There'll always be a debate creatively because there can be something that is incredibly beautiful and powerful, but it is just viewed as an installation. It needs to be something to experience."

"It can take days to curate an art piece, an art show, just one room, to tell the right story, because you create a link like a magic or a power that links everything together in an experience. An environment of dressing a scarf hall is exactly the same practice, exactly the same."

The differing view on whether product curation is merely visual merchandising or whether it is part of curatorial practice concerned with the broader curation of a physical experience, may stem from the evolving definition of curation. As outlined in 6.1.9., it is suggested in that curation has been traditionally understood with the lens of art history curation, where authenticity, scholarship and preservation expertise has been critical in the context of arranging masterpieces or unique works of art. However, in 6.1.2., it was also recognised in the research that new forms of curation are developing that reflect the field of the subject matter and also place the curation of an experience, with products acting as props, as the key objective:

As stated by C3:

"I think there's a lot of reflection in the field itself, particularly within younger fields, like fashion curation or design curation, which doesn't have as much long-term scholarship and introspection that the field of art curation has."

"I was recently at a symposium at the London College of Fashion regarding the establishment of a new course "Fashion Curation". This is polar opposite to a panel of museum curators where it is all about the authenticity of the artefacts, accuracy, knowledge and scholarship. The curators at the LCF let that go because the overall vision and experience is what's important."

“They’re working in a much looser way and wanting to be provocative, while of course, respectful of history. They’re wanting to build a narrative and they accept that sometimes the objects are like props in the way that they’re props in visual merchandising in a luxury retail store”

The second type of physical curation, display curation, was identified in the research as the most tangible form of curation as it is physical in nature, one that demonstrates the curatorial ability of the luxury retailer and one that also offers the most opportunity for dynamic interaction and co-creation of experiences with customers. It was described as the nature in which the luxury retail store displays and curates its products through physical display elements, which are both “hard” e.g. architecture, fixtures, furniture, lighting, and “soft” or ambient, e.g. colour, smell and sound.

As stated by EC1:

“The best retailer understands how to create an experience – the art of display.”

It was recognized in the research that the art of display in luxury retail was observed to be a curatorial activity akin to that found in cultural exhibitions:

As commented on by R1:

“The context with which we show and display it (the curated edit), is taking curation quite in its literal form of what you do in an exhibition”

It was also identified that it is at this point that the curated brand concept comes to life as it is disseminated and delivered by multiple display points across the luxury retail organization:

“It (the brand concept) is really honed down into this really tight package. We develop a creative pack that cascades down to teams of buyers, windows, visual merchandising teams, special projects, installation teams. They are all briefed and given tools” (R4)

It is also identified that it is at this stage in the curation process in luxury retail that the role of the guest curator or collaborations take place, in particular, the injection of exhibition design expertise from exhibition curators who advise on staging as well as crafting of the story or the narrative to communicate the brand concept using innovative displays:

As stated by C2:

“We did a design prize for Perrier Jouet and then the five shortlisted candidates were each invited to do a window in Selfridges. People were completely encapsulated by it. It worked really well for Selfridges. Apparently, it made the footfall go up. Since then they’ve committed to do some really interesting curatorial display projects and I really like the way that they latch onto festivals and exhibitions. I think it works really well.”

The focus on the creation of an experience and staging of an experience through a multi-sensory environment was commented on by the respondents. References to experiences being “staged” and providing “entertainment” and “a bit of theatre” suggests that there may be a link between the display of the luxury retail store and theatre.

There was also an interesting reference from EC1, the cultural institution exhibition and experience consultant, regarding how display techniques are borrowed from luxury retail for cultural institutions.

As stated by EC1:

“We curate displays like luxury retailers, with lighting, atmosphere, we use a lot of everything together. It’s about theatre in space, it’s about storytelling. It’s about using space as a receptacle for a scenario, for an experience. It’s having a sense of what you can do to display things and create theatre, spectacle, but also that has meaning that you can shed light on, illuminate something for people. That’s not museum curating, that’s not even design. I get my best ideas from luxury retail.”

A second influence on display curation, art, was also commented in Theme 2 as it has become increasingly fashionable and is influencing luxury retail display curation in multiple ways, with the end result that there is a blurring in terms of visual display between what one experiences in an art gallery and a luxury store. It was discussed that art itself or collaborations with artists are being deployed as a tool or strategy to renew and refresh the visual brand experience in store.

As stated by EC1:

“Luxury retail store designers use the same architects as they use for museums and galleries. Louis Vuitton use Jean-Michel Wilmotte in Paris who is brilliant. He did the Louvre, he’s a brilliant museum designer and he also does retail. When you look at the Bond Street Louis Vuitton store it is a stunning piece of design.”

R7 was in agreement and also commented with reference to the deployment of Rem Koolhaas, the architect of the Prada flagship store, and the more recent Fondazione in Milan, Prada's new arts complex that was established "as an outpost to analyse present times"[28]:

"Rem Koolhaas is more of a curator in terms of display for Prada"

It was also identified in the research that not only were the luxury brand-owned art institutions an indication of how the luxury retailer was associating the brand, the stores and the experiences in store with art, but also the creation of artistic collaborations directly relating to display. Artist collaboration for the purpose of in-store display were provided by Louis Vuitton, Selfridges, Liberty and Matchesfashion.com, examples of which are below:

As stated by R4:

"We worked with Tracey Emin to launch her shop before she started Emin International. We do a lot of satellite things with artists and art so that they'll have big exposure and we'll satellite it in our store to make our store display and experience exciting."

This focus on using art or artists in the curation of display was also identified in a recent interview with Alannah Weston, Creative Head at Selfridges:

"When I first came here eight years ago it was all about what artist I could work with and put in the window. I'm still interested in that and my team are really brilliant at that. They compile amazing sets of imagery, not of other retail environments or even interiors but of artworks, historical images"[29]

The focus on employing artists to add value and create an experience was also commented on by R2:

"You do have a fixed time with a window, you can sometimes be more conceptual and have a live window. We're collaborating with an artist who is a graffiti artist. He's collaborated with the Liberty of London art fabrics department to create a fabric for us, then he's going to come and recreate the fabric in the window for London Fashion Week. We've also collaborated with Mathis. We do theatre productions as well."

R1 also talked about the frequency with which Matchesfashion.com collaborates with artists:

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[28] Source: http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/architecture-design-blog/2015/may/06/rem-koolhaas-crafts-spectacular-city-of-art-for-prada-milan (Accessed 21.9.15)

[29] Source: http://thegentlewoman.co.uk/#/library/alannah-weston (Accessed 21.9.15)

"We have worked quite frequently with artists. We've done installations in the stores. There's always a conversation about art, it informs so much of what we do. From designer's collection to how we approach things. I think there's a huge amount of cross-over."

A final finding was that integral to the physical curation of display, is the curation of a story or narrative, which is not just linked to or enhanced by the artist or the curator, but entirely driven by the curated brand concept. Storytelling curation was observed to be an inherent and integrated part of the curated brand concept and display curation, which is now reviewed.

7.1.1.6. Storytelling

Storytelling was observed to play a significant part in the curation process. It received the most coverage and references in the research findings, with all luxury retailers and exhibition curators commenting that the fundamental principle of curation is storytelling.

Storytelling was observed to represent a narrative that brings to life the curated concept and captures the imagination of customers. An example of how a curated concept was brought to life and create a brand experience was provided by R2 who described a Liberty Christmas curated concept and story about "a ship that launched a thousand gifts". The story told was about how Liberty was built out of two old ships, their provenance and linked to Marlowe's Doctor Faustus poem about Helen of Troy to create a theatrical brand experience:[30]

"For this year, our Christmas is going to be a store that launched a thousand gifts and very similar to the tale, the face that launched a thousand ships." (R2)

R4 also commented on a curated storewide concept and story in 2013 titled "No noise". The story told was about the power of quiet and how to see the beauty in function and find calm among the crowds. The brand experience was designed and implemented in various forms, including, for example: "The Silence Room" where consumers were invited to relax and de-stress and leave 21st distractions (e.g. mobile phones) in lockers; "The Quiet Shop" where "we pay homage to the heroes of minimalism with a carefully curated edit from the Spring/Summer 2013 catwalks" and where some of the world's most recognizable brands removed their logos creating collectors items of the future; a special art-window design collaboration project by artist Katie Paterson to deliver a visual representation of the No Noise

[30] Christopher Marlowe wrote in Doctor Faustus (1564-1593) referring to Helen of Greece: "Was this face that launch'd a thousand ships, And burnt the topless towers of Ilium? Sweet Helen, make me immortal with a kiss". This poem refers to the thousand ships that were launched to transport Greek soldiers to rescue the abducted Helen of Sparta in Troy.

story, Idler Academy series of talks about cloud spotting, fishing and poetry and Headspace Pods throughout the store which offered 10 minute guided meditations.[31]
Respondents also commented that storytelling is based on having an audience and being a two-way interaction, involving a storyteller and a listener or recipient, who may ask questions and influence the way in which the story is told. This two-way, interactive dynamic was identified to influence the relationship between the storyteller and the customer and determines the brand experience. It is for that reason that this type of curatorial activity is defined as "relational curation" in this thesis.

It was described by C5, who stated she had worked extensively in both luxury retail and exhibition environments, as:

"It's about making sense of something in a really interesting way, telling a story, having a very good understanding of the subject. You can't be a curator if you don't understand and tell the story of your subject."

This position was echoed by C3:

"The focus is to try and get audiences to engage with things in a way that is multi-layered and more in-depth…the notion that storytelling, communication and learning experiences are very important, they're the key objectives."

The luxury retailers also identified storytelling as a critical element of the curatorial process, for example, as stated firstly, by R2:

"A good curator will tell a very powerful, concise story"

and also by R4:

"Stories are important so that they (the customers) feel like they've had the Selfridges experience"

The nature of storytelling as a curatorial activity, therefore relates to both the curation of the content; the development of a highly inspiring tale that takes the listener on an immersive journey in conjunction with the physical curated experience, as well as curation of the relationship, through engagement and opportunities for interaction and co-creation of experiences that relate to the story.

[31] Source: http://www.selfridges.com/GB/en/content/article/no-noise-selfridges Accessed: 21.9.15

7.1.1.7. Experience

The final step of the curatorial process was identified to be co-created experiences with customers, resulting from their interaction with the curated experience in the luxury retail environment. Brand experience was observed to signify multiple types of experience, for example: entertainment, with the intention to delight or surprise customers, and further differentiate the luxury retail brand. It was identified that this step in the curatorial process represented relational curation as experiences are perceived as being individual and co-created by customers and the luxury retailer. This indicates that the curatorial process of designing and developing brand experience may not necessarily driven by a managerial-centric perspective, but rather is more open and engaging and acknowledges the importance of customer co-creation.

“It’s pretty much down to how they (the customers) engage with us, how they engage with the brand. It doesn’t have to be how we want them to do it.” (R4)

R1 was also in agreement regarding the importance of enabling customers to enjoy the brand experience in an individual, personalised way:

“Whether it’s an exhibition visitor or shopper, you’ve got to allow a sense of the individual, how they want to experience it and how they want to choose and create their touch points and what they want to take away from it.”

Findings also identified that co-creation of experiences were happening in luxury retail. Various mechanisms were identified, from participating in guest or collaborator curated displays, for example the Creative Shelf and cameras in Louis Vuitton, the interactive exhibition-type installations in Matchesfashion.com, immersive theatre in Selfridges, through to customers participating in-store as “honorary shopkeepers”.

As commented on by RC1, who builds relationships customers by inviting them to co-curate the brand experience:

“We also have this thing where you get honorary shopkeepers. So we might get our patrons or sometimes other supporters to put on the coats. They then invite people as they really enjoy playing shopkeepers...Then they invite all their friends. So it's really successful. It also enables us to extend our networks and keeps the energy going of the shop.”

This form of relational curation suggests that different roles may exist in the luxury retail organisation to support and enhance co-curation opportunities for the consumer at various points along the luxury retail brand experience. Luxury retail roles are now examined in Theme 9.

7.2. Theme 9 – The Role of Curation in The Design and Development of Brand Experience

Theme 9 is concerned with the various curatorial roles observed and commented on across the two types of luxury retailers, MBLRs and SBLRs. The focus of this theme relates to how the curatorial roles influence, contribute to and impact the design and development of brand experience in luxury retailing.

7.2.1. The Role of the Curator in the Design and Development of Brand Experience

The role of curation in the design and development of brand experience was positioned as an important one in the luxury retail environment by the respondents. However, as outlined in Theme 6, different interpretations and perspectives of what constitutes curation differed, with, for example, R1 relating it to buying, and R7 relating it to editing, suggesting that different types of curatorial roles exist.

“We use the word curation a lot in everything we do. It’s one of what we would consider to be our core pillars in the company. So for me and for us, the word curation would start within the business as buying. We consider it to be part of our DNA and probably our biggest point of difference as a luxury fashion retailer” (R1)

R7 also commented that “The role of the curator editing is the most important thing in today’s brand communications because everyone is online and there is so much information, there is so much product. I mean it’s unnavigable without it.”

All of the luxury retailer respondents used different terms to describe their roles, for example, buyer, editor, creative director and even conductor, and how they influence the design and development of brand experience through the observed seven key curatorial activities.

For example, the Selfridges key curatorial role, identified as the creative director, focuses on the curation of trends and development of concepts that ultimately, create and drive brand experiences across the organisation. In Matchesfashion.com, the key curator role at Matchesfashion.com is the CEO, who works closely with the head buyer and also influences all elements of the brand experience across the organisation. The nature of the key curatorial

role was observed to differ again at Liberty, where the role of the curator also impacts the design and development of brand experience, but who uses the term “conductor” as a metaphor, conducting the building and various teams as an orchestra to deliver curated experiences every day and influencing the end-to-end brand experience.

In the case of the sole luxury brand retailer, Louis Vuitton, the curator was referenced as the artistic director or the creative director, but also the sales associates, who are responsible for curating the physical and relational elements of the brand experience in store. However, regardless of the title, as presented in Theme 8, all of the luxury retailers referred to similar curatorial practices regarding how they embed and bring the brand experience to life across the organisation.

In addition, the respondents commented that the majority of the roles with curatorial responsibility were people who worked as part of a team and there were limited single curator roles. It was also commented that due to organisation-wide curatorial activity, a network of curatorial roles exist with many of the roles connected and depending on each other. Examples provided include the various delivery teams in Selfridges and the multi-functional teams in Matchesfashion.com. However, it was observed that regardless of the functional role, the unifying focus was the delivery of the brand experience.

Table 7.1 highlights the 12 identified different organisational roles and functions that the respondents observed to have key curatorial responsibility with regards to the design and development of the brand experience:

Table 7.1: Organisational Roles and Functions with Key Curatorial Responsibility Regarding the Design and Development of Brand Experience

	Luxury retailer			
Roles	**Louis Vuitton (sole brand)**	**Selfridges (multi-brand)**	**Liberty (multi-brand)**	**Matchesfashion.com (multi-brand)**
CEO				✓
Artistic Director/Creative Director	✓			
Creative Director (and Team)		✓		
Director of Visual Identity			✓	
Head Buyer				✓
Editorial / Brand Communications				✓
Employees – Visual Merchandisers	✓	✓ (Delivery Teams as part of Creative Team)	✓ (Delivery Teams as part of Creative Team)	
Employees – Sales Staff	✓			
Luxury Retail Curation Collaborators: Artists or Cultural Institution Curators	✓	✓	✓	✓

In addition, a number of supporting roles were identified who deliver the luxury brand experience e.g. store managers and their teams. Table 7.2 highlights the different network of

roles that support the delivery of the brand experience as described by the various luxury retailers:

Table 7.2: Luxury Retail Curatorial Roles and Connections

Luxury Retailers				
7 Key Curatorial Activities	**Matchesfashion.com**	**Selfridges**	**Liberty**	**Louis Vuitton**
Research	CEO, Head Buyer	Research and Innovation Manager, Creative Team, Creative Director	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team	Head Office, Artistic Director / Creative Director
Filtering Ideas and Developing Concepts	CEO	Research and Innovation Manager, Creative Team, Creative Director	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team	Head Office, Creative Designer, Guest Collaborators
Acquiring Knowledge	CEO, Head Buyer	Research and Innovation Manager, Creative Director, Guest Collaborators	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team	Head Office, Guest Collaborators
Develop Concepts, Point of View and an Edit	CEO, Head Buyer, Creative Team	Research and Innovation Manager, Creative Team, Creative Director	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team	Store Managers, Sales Staff, Visual Merchandising, Guest Collaborators
Art of Display	Visual Team, Store Managers and Sales Staff	Delivery Teams, Exhibition Curator Consultants	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team, Sales Staff, Exhibition Curator Consultants	Store Managers, Sales Staff, Visual Merchandising. Guest Collaborators
Storytelling	Brand Communications, Creative Team, Visual Team, Sales Staff	Creative Team, Delivery Teams, Buyers	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team, Sales Staff	Head Office, Store Managers, Guest Collaborators
Experience	Store Managers, Sales Staff, Online Service	Delivery Teams	Director of Visual Identity, Creative Team, Sales Staff	Store Managers, Sales Staff

Findings regarding the role of the curator by luxury retailer type responsible for the design and development of brand experience are now reviewed.

7.2.1.1. Curator Roles by Luxury Retailer Type

It is acknowledged that of the four luxury retailers examined in the research, one of the organisations represents a sole luxury brand retailer, Louis Vuitton, whilst the remaining three luxury retailers, Liberty, Selfridges and Matchesfashion.com, are MBLRs.

This suggests that despite all of the luxury retailers selling cross-category lifestyle luxury goods such as apparel, accessories, footwear, books; the nature of the role of curation may vary as the role of a sole luxury brand curator is limited to one brand.

In contrast, the MBLR curates and sells a far larger number of luxury brands and therefore the construction of a multi-brand story or narrative to represent a curatorial viewpoint indicates that there are more factors at play to consider. For this reason, the findings are separated by luxury retailer type.

7.2.1.2. Sole Luxury Brand Retailer Curatorial Roles

Several differences were identified between the type and number of curatorial roles in Louis Vuitton compared to the role of the curator in a MBLR. An example of this is the role of the luxury brand artistic director, who is responsible for designing the haute couture collections and being the creative lead and visionary of a sole luxury brand, such as Nicolas Ghesquière at Louis Vuitton. This design-focused role does not exist in a MBLR (unless there is also an incumbent own brand) where, instead, a range of luxury brands is bought by the luxury retailer's buyer or creative director.

Within Louis Vuitton, it was identified that there were four types of curatorial activity-related roles: artistic director, employees as visual merchandisers, service and sales staff and finally, collaborating curators, as outlined in Table 7.3. These roles are now examined in turn.

Table 7.3: Curatorial Activity-Related Roles Identified in Louis Vuitton

Curatorial Role	Artistic / Creative Director	Visual Merchandisers	Sales Associates	Guest Collaborators
Identified Curatorial Activities and Responsibilities	Designs and develops the creative vision of the brand and brand experience	Curates display stories and themes	Supports the Visual Merchandising team to curate display stories and themes and to curate and deliver the desired brand experience	Injects new and innovative ideas to enhance and differentiate the brand and brand experience through in-store exhibitions, product line design and collaboration

The Artistic Designer/Creative Director and the Curator of the Brand

Curation in Louis Vuitton was described as identification of a creative idea, interpretation and development of a collection to represent the idea and the presentation of the idea.

As stated by R3:

"Curation is really when you bring your subjective - your interpretation of an idea. Yeah, when you say you have maybe a range of options and you decide these are the few specific ingredients I'm going to choose out of all these range of options and you think this is what I like or this is what I want to represent, this is what I feel is relevant and is worth looking at more than others."

In the interview with R3, four roles were identified as being involved in curatorial activities. Firstly, the artistic / creative director, responsible for setting the brand vision and identity,

influencing the design and development of the aesthetics of the store, and therefore, overall brand experience.

“We could say there is curation done at the top level in our head office by the artistic director because if you think of all the visual merchandising, all our display, every season or whenever a product is launched, whenever we have a new range of products launched there will be direction and guidelines coming with themes as to how we should present them.” (R3)

“He could decide or could send a general message about the brand and say for this month we're focusing on this theme so please represent it more in your stores.” (R3)

“I guess the curator has one of the final voice on his vision, what he feels, what he sees, what he wants it to look like and then they try to reach that interpretation… You can change the layout, the walls and the location of the walls. The way you move inside, the lighting.” (R3)

The role of the artistic director was presented as one of an expert and an authority, and who creates a vision for the brand that leads to a curated collection of products, informing the sales channels such as the luxury flagship store regarding how the Louis Vuitton brand experience should be implemented and manifested.

Visual Merchandisers and the Curators of the Art of Display

Visual merchandisers were also identified to be curators in Louis Vuitton. The art of display was recognised to constitute a key curatorial activity. Whilst not necessarily being labeled formally as “curators” in title, it was acknowledged that the work they do is curatorial.

As stated by R3:

“In the stores we always have visual merchandisers whose main responsibility is to take care of the presentation of the products. So some people will do this, conjoint with the responsibility of sales associate, but many people will do this fulltime because it's quite important work. Curating refers to ways to gather the products together to make them coherent when you look at them as a story.”

“The curation in store is the responsibility of various sets of people. You’ve got your sales associates, your dedicated visual merchandisers…it varies what needs to be done. It’s always constantly changing because you might have a beautiful display in the morning, but if you sell three pieces of that then you have nothing else in stock to replace it with. If we are saying the word curator as all of these people who work in visual merchandising and contribute, then yes, we have a lot of these.” (R3)

Therefore, the role of the visual merchandiser in Louis Vuitton is identified in the research to be an important role from a display and product curation perspective in-store. Due to the continual changes in the store environment and interactions with customers, the ability to maintain the brand experience is dependent on the visual merchandisers being able to regularly adapt, curate and alter displays, all of which serve to reinforce the brand and brand experience.

Sales Associates and the Curators of Experiences

The role of the sales associate was also identified as a curatorial role from several perspectives. Firstly, to support visual merchandisers with the art of display in store regarding the collections created by the artistic director and developed into seasonal display themes.

The nature and number of themes curated in store relates to the collection fashion shows designed by the artistic director. Themes from the fashion show are developed into in-store themes which not only determine the products on sale, but also the style, design, layout and visual merchandising of the store, as well as all brand communications, indicating the artistic designer's influence on all elements of the brand experience.

As stated by R3:

"The collection is divided into five themes as fashion shows. They could say for this month we're focusing on this theme so please represent it more in your stores. Then it's up to your discretion, the visual merchandising team, yourself, the feedback you have with your clients."

"Based on what you have in stock you can decide to represent two themes, three themes in your space. It's up to you what you feel is - maybe you have more stock, or you feel more excited or you feel should be seen, or you decide okay I want to put this theme this weekend." (R3)

"So the curation end of the products in the store, it's the responsibility of various sets of people. You've got your sales associates and your dedicated visual merchandisers." (R3)

The requirement for sales associates to support visual merchandisers in the art of display was identified due to the fast pace and ever-changing nature of luxury retail and the need to adapt when pieces in-store were sold and needed to be replaced and the specialist VM team were not on site. Using the knowledge of the sales associates regarding what might be a

suitable alternative or replacement was perceived to be valuable in the development of a newly curated display.

*"*It's always evolving so you need a team around you of sales associates who are very aware of what's suitable and what's not suitable. You need to have some strong people who are able to change the displays on a regular basis if you don't have your VM specialist on the premises to make it suitable for what we want to represent the brand based on what we physically have in store." (R3)

In addition to providing curatorial display support, sales associates were also observed to be critical to the brand experience in light of the contact with customers and the responsibility to curate the required brand experience.

"You know retail at this end is more and more about creating experiences. The stores are built in a way to create these nice experiences and the sales associate teams inside the stores are also trained to be able to create with their personality, with who they are and this special experience. Ultimately, even though people are buying the product in the stores I do think they are coming a lot for the experience. The product becomes a bit of a memory of it." (R3)

Guest Collaborator Curators

A key finding is that one of the key strategies that Louis Vuitton, as a 161-year old brand, uses is to keep the brand and brand experience fresh, relevant, innovative and desirable is to invite artists or renowned cultural figures to collaborate and act as co-designers or guest curators to curate in-store exhibitions and product lines.

R3 commented that:

"There's a desire to surprise clients all the time, surprise people. Come out with something unexpected; push your own boundaries as a company or as an artist. There is a need to stay relevant for everyone, for everything so I think for Louis Vuitton when we do collaborations with artists it's a way to stay relevant, to connect to the culture. Luxury brands need to keep changing and innovating otherwise they die if they keep doing the same thing all the time so they need to renew themselves. All these collaborations are ways to renew themselves."

It was observed that Louis Vuitton, like other well-established, heritage luxury brands regularly invite renowned people in the public eye to inject the luxury brand with new ideas to stay connected to the target market through unique design and curatorial collaborations:

R7 also commented on this and stated that heritage luxury brands deliberately invite people who are perceived to be cool or innovators to collaborate on product and store design or exhibition-type installations in order to link these attributes to the luxury brand and brand experience:

“On the whole, luxury brands and retailers are pretty damn classic and don’t take too many risks but the environment is the endorsement that it’s okay, we know it’s modern, we know what’s cool, we’re happening and if you come and shop in here, that means you’re happening too. That’s really what it is.”

R3 also admitted that the selection of collaborators are strategic with clear business objectives in mind, for example, increased publicity regarding the linkage to the artist and therefore further perceived linkage with art and culture:

“There’s a lot of discussion and process about who we are going to collaborate with, which artists are suitable for us or not.”

“I’m sure that it’s not random selections. I’m sure they select specific artists with specific goals in mind. The Chapman brothers based in East London, very quirky, very grotesque, was a fashion statement to speak to our audience because we get a lot of coverage with these collaborations. So, it’s a way for a brand like Louis Vuitton to remain relevant in a culture. Luxury brands need to otherwise they will die if they keep doing the same thing all of the time, so they need to renew themselves. All of these collaborations are ways to renew themselves and the brand. We are not the cash cow of LVMH for nothing.” (R3)

R3 provided an example with a curation collaboration project called “Creative Shelves” in the Louis Vuitton Bond Street store in London and described how guest curators are influencing brand experience in store:

“We have a set of shelves in our bookstore that we call our “Creative Shelves”. There will be an artist who will select books or pieces that influence him or her work. For example, we did a Creative Shelf with the Chapman brothers when they designed a specific print for menswear. They curated the Creative Shelf for about a month or two. There were a few books from other authors who had influenced them. We produced a limited series of disposable cameras. They were all numbered and signed and in the camera were the photographs that had inspired the collection for them. So you could decide to just keep the camera intact because if you had it developed you had to throw away the camera, so you could decide do I want to keep the piece itself as an art piece, or do I want to use the photos inside them as an art piece.”

Another example provided regarding the strategic timing of the guest collaborations was the upcoming Creative Shelf with Jurgen Teller, a world-renowned photographer who shot the first collection of the new Louis Vuitton artistic director, Nicholas Ghesquiere:

“We’re going to have a Creative Shelf with Jurgen Teller which would make sense at the moment because we have his book in Dover Street Market and New Bond Street stores, which he photographed our first collection with our new designer, Nicholas Ghesquiere. It is really curated.”

The example of the Chapman brothers guest curatorial collaboration outlines the strategy of Louis Vuitton to firstly, link with an emerging, upcoming artist to infer the attributes of innovation and newness on a classic, heritage luxury brand.

Secondly, it was observed that the collaboration was not just a PR stunt or celebrity endorsement, but based on actual genuine co-production of work with artists, for example, the design of menswear pieces or the photography of the new designer’s collection, therefore, once again positions the work closer to status of art, which being limited, was commented that it adds to its exclusivity and appeal.

Thirdly, the curatorial aspect of the collaboration in store was observed to present an invitation to consumers to participate and co-create an innovative brand experience, not just by seeing the books the artists have chosen, but having the opportunity to consume the art itself and make a decision to retain a piece of art (the camera) or develop the camera and photos (also possessing artistic qualities).

Fourthly, it was observed that the role of the guest curator enables Louis Vuitton to present a limited and unusual brand experience in store to consumers and make them feel special as they gain an exclusive and rare insight behind the curtain, into the artistic world and also have been a part of it, inferring emotional and psychological qualities of being “in the know” regarding the latest, coolest upcoming artists.

Finally, it was commented that the luxury, classic and heritage attributes of the Louis Vuitton brand facilitate the risk for consumers to engage with off-beat or unknown artists and experiences as the Louis Vuitton brand is perceived to be a marker of good taste and therefore its engagement with the artists sends a strong message that it is also safe for the consumer to engage.

However, it was also made clear in the research that the objective of the guest curators is not a ‘nice to have’ but rather, was underpinned by commercial goals of enhancing sales, as stated by R3:

“In a luxury retail environment you want people to buy things, not just come and see and not to buy things. So, yes, you might have a successful collaboration that gets a lot of coverage but if ultimately it doesn’t sell anything, I don’t think it’s considered to be a large success. It’s not enough for us to have people come and see it, more to buy it.”

However, despite observing that different curatorial roles existing in the sole luxury brand retailer, it is also worth noting that the over-riding emphasis in the design and development of brand experience is observed to be a top-down managerial view, that it is produced and delivered in a regimented fashion. The nature of the responses given and the examples provided in the research suggest that curation in Louis Vuitton is an activity that is undertaken for multiple reasons, but nonetheless “done to” consumers. The extent of the control of the brand experience was noted by R3:

“To deliver these experiences consistently, it’s very regimented at Louis Vuitton.”

This finding suggests that whilst the role of the curators may be perceived as a mediator or facilitator or even mechanism of brand experiences, they are nonetheless delivered within a tightly controlled framework and possibly less focused on co-creation of brand experiences with consumers. This suggests that the Louis Vuitton perspective of the design and development of brand experience may fall into the camp of the top-down, managerial-view rather than an organic and open customer co-creation view, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

7.2.1.3. Multi Brand Luxury Retailer Curatorial Roles

The MBLRs interviewed refer to senior professionals working in roles in Selfridges, Liberty and Matchesfashion.com. The key curatorial roles responsible for the design and development of brand experience identified in the research may be observed in Table 7.4 (shaded to represent the MBLRs only):

Table 7.4: Identified Different Curator Roles in Multi Luxury Brand Retail

Luxury Retailer/Roles	Louis Vuitton	Selfridges	Liberty	Matchesfashion.com
Type of Luxury Retailer	Sole luxury brand	Multi-brand	Multi-brand	Multi-brand
CEO				✓
Artistic Director	✓			
Creative Director		✓		
Director of Visual Identity			✓	
Head Buyer				✓
Editorial / Brand Communications				✓
Employees – Visual Merchandisers	✓	✓ (Delivery Teams as part of Creative Team)	✓ (Delivery Teams as part of Creative Team)	
Employees – Sales Staff	✓		✓	✓
Luxury Retail Curation Collaborators: Artists or Cultural Institution Curators	✓	✓	✓	✓

Selfridges and Matchesfashion.com are privately owned by the Galen Weston and family, and Ruth and Tom Chapman respectively, whereas Liberty is private-equity backed and managed. This family ownership structure plays a large and influential part in the direction and management in Selfridges and Matchesfashion.com, with the family employed in senior curatorial roles. Alannah Weston, daughter of the owner of Selfridges, Galen Weston, is titled Creative Director and Ruth Chapman, the co-founder and co-CEO of Matchesfashion.com with her husband, is also the main buyer and curator.

The curatorial roles identified in the three MBLRs span the retail organization, ranging from a CEO, creative director, head buyer, editorial brand communications, visual merchandisers, sales associates and finally, guest curator collaborators. These will be examined in turn.

CEO

A key finding in the research was that the CEO of Matchesfashion.com was identified as the lead curator, indicating that curation as an activity is a senior functional responsibility, positioned at the highest level within a retail organisation. It was also observed that the curation direction of the CEO is distilled down from the top of the organisation to the bottom and all departments are actively focused on curation.

As stated by R1:

“So our CEO, Ruth, she’s the lead curator and that is distilled down to different heads of department. What’s interesting is that every head of department thinks about curation and that’s even tech. So tech would think about that, to my point about how do you let people engage with it, so that it forms the content of it.”

It was also observed that curation and edit are one of the organisation’s five pillars, described as organisational-wide strategic objectives and navigation posts when making decisions to reflect back on, indicating further evidence that curation is taken seriously within the organisation, as stated by R1:

“Whenever we’re making any decisions in the business, do they come back and hit these goals, so curation is one of them. So, whenever we’re doing something, we come back and go, does that tick that? Is it fulfilling the brief somehow.”

This suggests that there are three key findings: firstly, that the curated edit is a means of differentiation for the luxury retailer. Secondly, as a result, there is very strong focus on developing a curated edit, driven by the most senior position in the organisation, which influences the overall organisational culture. In addition, it suggests that there exists a clear definition of the brand identity, ideology and priority as it is led and driven by the CEO. Possession and communication of a clear brand identity and ideology driven from the top appears to enable the CEO to steer the brand experience and be a constant reference point across the organisation. Thirdly, that the nature of curation in Matchesfashion.com and consequently, the curatorial roles are focused more on the editorial elements of curation.

Creative Director

It was identified that within Selfridges, in contrast to Matchesfashion.com, the process of curation started before the curation of an edited collection of brands.

It was found that curation played an important role at the origins of the design and development of a brand experience, through the curation of trends, ideas and concepts that shape the seasonal buy across departments and all aspects of the seasonally-driven brand experiences. It was also observed that the continual research and curation of ideas and trends into brand experience concepts is paramount to Selfridges’ differentiation in the market place. Further, it was found that the Selfridges brand itself is perceived to the curatorial sieve or filter that can take an idea and transform it into a value added, innovative and unique experience.

As stated by R4, regarding the importance of ideas and curated concepts for the design and development of brand experience:

“New ideas are a major point of difference and competition in Selfridges.”

The drive to continually curate concepts to deliver new brand experiences was also identified and commented on by R4:

“We don’t have any specificity when we start to curate trends and ideas. Nothing at all. Anything goes. That’s the number one thing that is talked about here all the time – creating new and innovative customer or brand experiences.”

The importance of the strength of the brand, regarding it acting as a lens or a sieve for curated concepts, was emphasised by R4:

“When it comes to working for a brand like Selfridges, it’s a totally different kind of curation, because you’re sieving – the sieve is Selfridges. I think it is very much about being firsthand – it’s absolutely key, otherwise you can’t be innovative, you’re just following. I mean no one can have an original idea any more ever because they’ve all been done, but if you put something that seems fresh through the sieve of the brand, you get something unique.”

Through the responsibility of identifying and curating ideas and trends into brand experience concepts to be rolled out across the organization, the role of the creative director was identified to be instrumental to the curation of brand experience overall:

“The two main functions of the creative director is one, the experience of people who connect with the brand directly and the other, is who we are in the world as a brand, the perception of the brand and the experience itself. I think those two are directly influenced by Linda (Hewson, the Creative Director) and her team. That is pretty much our function.” (R4)

“On every customer touch-point, signage, imagery, communication, look and feel, all tangible and intangible – all of that stuff is in the brief. Then there is the graphics team who has a director that reports to Linda as well. They go and make the store look amazing. They’re super talented, the same for the windows area, same for visual merchandising, pop-ups, all of that stuff. It all comes from Linda’s team.” (R4)

The extent of the influence and power of the creative director and creative team was observed to be considerable, with only the power of the board to seek agreement from before mass dissemination of the concept across the business:

“They (the curated ideas) get embedded in everyone in these big creative symposiums that we do and help everyone understand the direction. The second stage of the creative direction cycle is that it gets developed into a proper concept. You have to get everyone’s buy in. We can’t brief concepts out until every single person on the board agrees. They have to engage with it as I have to engage with them. Then when they are approved, that gets briefed out to all the key delivery people in the business, so everyone from buying and merchandising to window displays, our website, online, all tools, all product development.” (R4)

The fact that the curated concept influences the buy and the buyers, suggests a considerable level of power that the creative director possesses. It is unlike Matchesfashion.com, and Liberty, which will be shortly examined, where the buyer edits and curates the seasonal buy first, and thereafter, curated brand experience concepts around the curated buy or edit are developed as a result. In addition, the role of the creative director as the brand concept curator also extends to ensuring that the concepts are not only communicated and understood but are also fully embedded in the organisation:

“We do a lot of things that guide people. We do lots of handbooks, there’s a brand handbook that explains it and ridiculous imagery, mad quotes and stuff, but it’s the way we measure how well it is embedded, also sales as a direct result too.” (R4)

As well as R4, other respondents acknowledged Selfridges own style of curation, noting also that the creative director draws in additional creative people to develop powerful, curated concepts.

This suggests that there are two key findings. Firstly, due to Selfridges strategic brand positioning as being a highly innovative and ideas company, the focus of curation is on the design and development of brand experience curated concepts with the curated edit, product curation and display curation all being influenced by the brand experience concept. Consequently, the creative director and team possess considerable power and influence regarding the overall direction of the brand and the design and development of brand experience.

Secondly, the reference to the multiple roles involved in the curatorial process of designing and developing brand experiences highlights that despite the creative director being one functional role and lead of the creative team, there are many people involved and actively participating in the delivery of the curated concept across all types of curation.

Director of Visual Identity

A key finding was that the Director of Visual Identity of Liberty identified the retail environment as an ever-changing and dynamic installation and one that needs to always ensure that key messages are communicated and a brand experience is delivered. Curation as an activity was one that was found to be something that was done every day as part of designing and developing the Liberty brand experience:

As stated by R2:

“Brand experience is at the heart of what we do. Brand experience operates on many different levels. I’m curating every day. One of my key objectives is that I want to make the building look and feel like what people perceive Liberty is. You have to harness it all.”

R2 also commented that a visual display cannot just be beautiful or impressive but needs to underpin and deliver the desired experience:

“There’ll always be a debate creatively because there can be something that is incredibly beautiful and powerful but it is just viewed as an installation. It needs to be something to experience.”

The nature of how R2 curates every day was identified to be a leading, influencing and coordinating role focusing on the design and development of experiences. Instead of calling herself a “curator” or “creative director”, she preferred to use the metaphor of a conductor to describe her curatorial role due to the extent of her influence across different organisational elements:

“I’m influencing everything – the designing of brand experience, every single bit of it. I create the house with all of the multiple brands to sit there alongside each other.”

It was observed that by referencing the term “conductor” to describe her role, R2 understood the role to be directing the performance of a group of people, all with different tasks and talents, to produce a unified experience: the Liberty brand experience. The different management tasks of the role of R2 were identified to include curation of ideas and concepts, art of display, visual merchandising, editing and storytelling and ensuring that the multiple brand messages sit together as an experience that is consistent across the store.

Regarding the curation of ideas and concepts, similar to the Creative Director in Selfridges, it was identified that the curation of ideas and new concepts to continually integrate the multiple

brands on sale and renew and refresh the design of the overall luxury retail brand experience was critical, as stated by R2:

“We are constant stealers of ideas or adapter of ideas. It can be a mesh of maybe a couple of things. It can be a piece of art. There’s many different ways of bringing concepts to life and it depends on the concept and speaking very clearly about what you want to communicate and the customers to experience.”

Another important curatorial task identified was more physical in nature, the art of display and visual merchandising, as it was commented that they represent the link that holds the brand experience together across the whole store and forms a coherent story.

“In my job, I have to sit across all levels. That’s what makes it so difficult because if you are a buyer for the company, then you’re a buyer for that category. That’s your job. Not to look at everything from the roof down and everything that sits inside of it and see how it needs to knit together.” (R2)

A third curatorial task commented on as being critical to the design and development of brand experience was storytelling. It was commented that R2’s role as a curator is also as an editor and storyteller in conjunction with developing stories that come to life in physical displays and installations:

“I think a good curator will tell a very powerful, concise story of an era or a trend. A good curator is also a very good editor and isn’t shy of knocking things out and not including or showing too little or too much.”

In light of the various curatorial activities, ranging from concept creation through to delivering installation displays and visual merchandising, storytelling and ensuring everything is consistent, it was observed that curation is utilized as an important means to harness different functional elements of the retail operation to consistently stage and deliver hedonic experiences that delight consumers.

In addition, it is possible to draw upon and compare the curatorial activities associated with the creative teams in Selfridges and Liberty. It was observed that the creative director role in Selfridges placed considerable amount of focus on brand curation, i.e. curating concepts that shape the design and development of brand experience which are then disseminated down throughout and across the organization. It was identified that the Director of Visual Identity also focuses on brand curation but; possibly due to the acknowledged smaller size of operation and the unconventional store layout in Liberty, more on physical curation in terms of

the practical aesthetic, visual element of display and ensuring all brand experience sensory touch points were orchestrated and in sync.

Therefore, it appears that the Liberty senior Director of Visual Identity curatorial role is more hands-on and closer to the physical manifestation of curation and delivery of the brand experience than that in Selfridges, which has several organizational layers with multiple delivery teams responsible for transforming the curated concepts into brand experiences, such as a graphics team, special projects, window display. What is shared, however, is that both luxury retailers identify that curation plays an important part in the design and development of brand experience on a day-to-day basis.

Buyer

It was identified that in Matchesfashion.com the quality of a curated or edited product collection was perceived to be both a key differentiator in luxury retail and a considerable influence on the design of the brand experience.

As stated by R1:

“You can talk about businesses in lots of ways but fundamentally in luxury retail what it comes down to first of all is always the product. At the heart of it all, it’s about curation. I think it really is fundamental and I think it’s about being differentiated. I think it then influences and sets the context and the tone of the brand experience.”

As referenced in 6.2.1.1.2.1., it was identified that in Matchesfashion.com there is a hierarchical structure of curatorial activity as it starts with the CEO and then the buyer who researches and identifies the brands, edits and then progresses across the organisation focusing on the curation of products in the context of display and presentation, as stated by R1:

“Curation would start within the business as buying, therefore by the buyer or curator. We consider editing and buying to be part of our DNA and probably our biggest point of difference as a luxury retailer that’s now global. It’s the edit, so that’s curation. So it’s about selection. Then the curation process goes further, really. So, it starts with the literal way of the edit, the selection of the product, then it goes into the context with which we show and display it, which would be taking curation quite in its literal form of what you do in a museum. I think that’s the two sides of curation – one is selection and one is about context and presentation.”

The importance of the buyer and her high level of influence across the organisation regarding the design of the Matchesfashion.com brand experience was also identified, as stated by R1:

“I think the buyer and their curated edit influences the design of the brand experience for Matches. It’s absolutely at the core.”

“It all starts with the buyer and that very much directs then all the other, how we’ll play everything else in the season, from what events we’ll do to what we’ll write about in our magazine, to what will be the focus on the stories online and the treatment of that as well. That will then set, absolutely, a tone across the entire site and the boutiques for a season.”

The nature of the curatorial role of the buyer in Matchesfashion.com was identified to comprise of three key areas: firstly, the identification and discovery of new brands; secondly, editing and curation of those brands to create a distinct “Matchesfashion.com” point of view in the marketplace and thirdly, the curation of the products in-store for presentation, installation and exhibition-type experiences.

Regarding the first step in the curatorial process, research, whilst not identified as a scholarly or academic exercise compared to what a curator in a cultural institution may do, it was identified as highly practical and a significant commitment as the scope of research is both broad and deep.

As stated by R1:

“They’re (buyers) out in the markets seeing 400 brands now 4 times a year. They’re having conversations with designers, they’re visiting their studios, there’s a real understanding. They’re looking at cultural things that tie into that. They’re looking at reference points. They’re visiting all of the stores. They look at it more competitively.”

The second step was observed to involve the curation of the brands to produce the seasonal edit. The edit was found to be the core source of differentiation for the luxury retailer. It was identified that at this stage the buyer or curator focuses on generating a feeling and experience of discovery with regards to the introduction of new brands, styles and categories or the edited combination of luxury brands, as stated by R1:

“I think what’s really important with the curator and buyer is that they really challenge themselves and it’s really about trying to make it feel really delightful so that it’s a real experience and you’re really discovering something new. I think that’s very important to us.”

The third step referred to was consideration about the curation of the luxury brands in-store as an installation or exhibition-type space and also online with the support of narratives and editorial to create the Matchesfashion.com brand experience, as stated by R1:

"We always want Matchesfashion.com to feel like a discovery when you're on the site or in the store or whether you're at 23 Welbeck Street. That can be the discovery of a piece of Saint Laurent that you didn't expect to like so much, or it could be the discovery of a brand new label or fine jewellery or something we've collaborated with and done. So it is very emotional and it comes back to this idea of really delighting people and making something really exciting."[32]

The possession of a distinct point of view was identified to be critical for Matchesfashion.com and a fundamental means of differentiation in the marketplace and with consumers. It was also observed to be particularly important for a retailer with a small footprint and where the buy and range cannot be limitless:

"Luxury lifestyle store is about having a key point of difference. If you look at something like Net-a-Porter.com, which is a fantastic business, it's very much an online department store. It's very much about the fact that they always tick off lifestyle categories and buy from high to low. Whereas for us, we will always retain that luxury lifestyle boutique sensibility, which is more like curation at the heart of it. It comes back to the fact that if you've got a small footprint, you have to be really curated and that's the difference."

The importance of the curated edit as the source of competitive differentiation for Matchesfashion.com was also referred to in observation of competitors, as stated by R1:

"One of the criticisms of competitors of ours sometimes is that they feel they can be a little dull and lack variety in their edit and curation of brands."

It was identified that the nature of Matchesfashion.com business had over the last two years changed considerably due to unprecedented fast-paced growth online, with the company doubling in size and also the number of luxury brands it carries to over 400. As a result, it was commented that the physical stores have become venues for entertainment and sensory experience and the website, constituting 80% of sales, has become more like an online magazine which is based on a strong edit and supportive narratives. As stated by R1:

"I think increasingly with the way things go online, your stores are your installation spaces and they are your marketing opportunities. It's less about whether you're doing the depths of sales in the stores, but they're your brand opportunity and they're your physical touch points."

[32] 23 Welbeck Street is a townhouse in central London which is owned by Matchesfashion.com that is a dedicated space for presenting curated collections for customers and hosting special brand experiences.

“If you are going to make your customers come to something physical, it’s really about giving them a bit of theatre, within it, a bit of entertainment. The physical experience is becoming more and more like an installation. We launch concepts in stores, that’s the kind of thing that can really move.” (R1)

R1 provided an example that highlighted how luxury retailers are pursuing omni-channel retail strategies with stores becoming entertainment and education-focused installation spaces rather than the main retail sales channel, which is now online:

“We took a concept that was really developed for the idea of installation. We videoed about 40 young, different designers across womenswear and menswear – it felt much more like a gallery sort of space in which we did a key look on a mannequin, branded mannequin from each of them and a plinth with their video showing. So you could watch the video online and that’s something that now will travel and we’ll take into different markets.”

Consequently, as a result of the business transforming into the two key formats in the omnichannel retail strategy; the entertaining installation space of the shop and the online, curated magazine, the role of the buyer has also transformed:

“When we recently re-did (the store layout and design of) the Wimbledon store, that was very much one of the things we were thinking about. Actually, it’s having conversations that we’ve had, that we’ve changed the way the buyer goes into the store and it’s more now about reflecting different edits, even if they’re not necessarily going to sell the most. It’s got to be about conveying what we believe in and often that is about, it goes back to that education, it’s about some of the young designers or themes or trends, or almost studios or exhibition spaces we call them.”

The requirement for multiple edits both online and in-store has resulted in the role of the buyer becoming heavily involved in global research to accommodate and meet the needs of the global customer base, which was identified as influencing the nature of curation online. The buyer was thus identified to require multiple curatorial perspectives for individual markets when developing the edit, as stated by R1:

“From a curation perspective, it’s become very interesting for us that the business has grown so massively internationally, as it means that you’re having to take all those different cultural points in terms of the context to view and curated experience. I think editorially you’re crafting it for different markets too.”

It is observed that there are three key findings. Firstly, in the case of Matchesfashion.com, the role of the curator in the design and development of brand experience refers less about

creating the aura of a grand museum with a curated art-influenced collection of products, as observed in the case of Louis Vuitton, or a continual stream of innovative, curated brand concepts and experiences as observed in Selfridges. Instead, the emphasis is on communicating a differentiated edit of multi luxury brands as a competitive advantage and utilising different sales channels, online and in store for distinct purposes.

Secondly, due to the focus on the curated edit element of the role of the buyer, it is observed to almost stand apart and go beyond the role of a regular buyer, as the curated edit to support the omni-channel retail strategy is described as something different and unique. On the one hand, this may be observed to be related to the particular importance placed on the edit as a core strategic differentiator for Matchesfashion.com. On the other hand, the buying process itself was observed to be curatorial in nature, therefore by default casting the role of the buyer as a curatorial role.

Thirdly, the emphasis on the edit at Matchesfashion.com goes beyond the edit of the products itself, with a parallel focus on the edited narrative and story to support the product edit. The link to the curation of the narrative is the editor of the brand communications within Matchesfashion.com, which is also identified as a curatorial role. This role is now examined.

Editorial Brand Communications

The role of the editor in the context of brand communications was identified as an important role in luxury retail and one of the three key curatorial activities in Matchesfashion.com.

The development of narratives to support the luxury retailer's market positioning, brand identity and curated brand and product edit proposition both online and in-store was observed as critical. The importance of communicating to ensure understanding and generate an experience was also likened to a mediating role between the customer and the designer, one that may be found in a gallery or exhibitions, as stated by R1:

"Editorial focuses on the pillar (curation) very strongly because how do you curate stories, how do you engage, it goes back to that thing about it being relationships, to understand the interest and intent for designers, how do you communicate that with people, which again, is very much what people are doing through galleries and exhibition installations in museums. How do you bring to life and curate what a designer does?"

From an online perspective, it was identified that a compelling narrative is required to support the curated edit so that the consumer is not required to trawl all 400 brands to find something they like or wish to buy. In addition, it was identified that customers now wish to be part of the

co-creation of an edit and therefore the online proposition needs to provide an opportunity for the customer to do so. As stated by R1:

“Editorial curation is hugely important. People realise that they can be creative, they can call in the whole edit, things they want to have and try it all on at their home. So how do you do that online? You let people have their own wish-lists. Therefore, as a retailer and also being part of this co-creation process, you have to be very open to the fluidity of it all so that you can go out there and find the best selection of products from designers that you think are the most interesting and have a strong point of view. You make sure that you present it in a way that’s really compelling and curated for people so that it makes their lives easier to buy and engage with. Then you’ve got to listen to their ideas and how they want to curate it too.”

A second purpose of the narrative in terms of supporting the curated edit was identified to be a filter to ensure that the online experience, as part of the omni-channel retail strategy, is never flooded with too many brands or options, leading to confusion in the omni-channel retail strategy:

As stated by R1:

“It’s important to never flood the site, to flood the experience. It does always need to feel like it’s that curated edit, even though we are selling over 400 brands. So it always does need to have that strong point of view.”

From an in-store perspective, the development of curated narratives by an editor to support the delivery of the brand experience was also identified as critical. This was identified across all luxury retailers, for example, as stated by R4:

“Concepts and stories are important so that they (the customers) can feel like they’ve had the Selfridges experience or feel like they’ve had some experience which has touched them in a way that’s unique to something we’ve done and they’ll go away recognizing that and also hopefully carrying it on in some way.”

These findings suggest that curatorial roles are not limited to product, display or brand concept curation but also include editorial curation of stories and narratives that underpin, connect and reinforce the other types of curatorial activity and ensure the brand experiences come to life.

Guest Collaborators

Within the network of curatorial roles observed in luxury retail, the curatorial role of guest collaborators in luxury retail organisations was identified to relate particularly to more physical forms of curation. It was observed that guest collaborators played an influential role in the art of display, including the conceptualizing of themes and constructing of exhibition-type installations to enhance and enrich the luxury retailer's in-store brand experience.

However, depending on the type of luxury retailer, the nature of this role was identified to also cross-over with that of the curatorial roles of the creative director in regards to curating ideas and concepts, the director of visual identity in regards to the art of display and installation, the buyer in regards to the researching and development of a curated edit and finally, the editor in regards to curated narratives and stories to frame, channel and broaden the brand experience for the consumer.

With regards to the MBLR, the recruitment of external curators, often drawn from cultural institutions, such as the Barbican and Somerset House, was observed to be done with the objective of delivering a new perspective or angle regarding the physical curation of products and brands. It was identified that external curators and collaborators bring a vital means of ensuring the multi-luxury retailer brand experience remains fresh and innovative:

As stated by R6:

"Brands need to refresh as they can't have the same look and feel, and eye for 50 years. They need to refresh it to keep customers interested. Interestingly, if you are clever about it, someone like Karl Lagerfeld is clever about it because what he's done is surround himself by lots of new people every four years, so he's got fresh blood injecting a new perspective that he can direct. A brand and brand experience needs that otherwise it becomes stale."

In addition, as luxury retail spaces are evolving and becoming, in the case of Matchesfashion.com, exhibition-type venues are designed to bring to life curated edits and the brand experience, therefore, luxury retailers are specifically seeking exhibition-type display skills and abilities.

The similarity between what the objective of a luxury retail curated visual strategy is and the curatorial activity of an exhibition curator was identified as communicating information about a new discovery or theme and also designing an experience that could generate a positive emotional response in response to the stimuli presented which motivates some form of learning, attitude or behaviour:

As stated by R1:

“This is where I think the parallel between the exhibitions and fashion lies. It’s really about trying to share the delight that the buyer feels when they first meet a designer and see a collection because you’re using visual merchandising and the art of display, as you would in an exhibition too, to communicate and hopefully share that delight and insight.”

Exhibition curators from cultural institutions were interviewed as part of this research and the key finding was that they are often employed to collaborate with luxury retailers to curate concepts and products in displays, windows and temporary pop up installations in-store. The finding was that they perceive the reason that they are hired relates to the need for the luxury retailer to differentiate itself and project a deeper meaning on the collection of products that the luxury retailer is attempting to sell in order to present them in a superior, highly attractive way to customers and enhance the sales opportunity.

As stated by C3, curatorial collaboration projects have included Liberty and Selfridges:

“There is a desire, I think for high-end luxury stores and big department stores to offer a different kind of experience that sits alongside pure consumptions. We often work in association with shops to curate and market an exhibition. We’ve done curatorial projects with Liberty, they did a whole set of windows in response to a subject of an exhibition – the Surreal House exhibition.”

“I did consultancy for Selfridges, curating with artists and designers for big seasons. They’re still doing that. Alannah Weston was always very interested in that kind of stuff.” (C3)

It was also identified that curatorial skills continue to be used and provide an example of where one project is focusing on the specific blurring of cultural institution and luxury retailer, as stated by C3:

“There are other opportunities too but not something I can talk about at the moment, but there is something in the pipeline that will be much more of overtly blurring of the boundaries between gallery and shop and exhibition, which will be very interesting. We’re looking at doing a big project with guest curators looking at the notion of the vulgar and vulgarity. We’re talking with Selfridges about doing a big collaboration.”

The means of differentiation for the luxury retailer was identified in various ways, firstly, through the visual and publicised use of artists or culturally-focused curators who, through the vehicle of their curatorial work and association, infer the values of modernity, cultural relevance and innovation. Secondly, there is a desire to utilize the abilities of the exhibition

curator to curate spectacular exhibition-type of displays and installations and experiences similar to those found originally in the grand old department stores of the 19th century.

As stated by C3:

"Fashion houses and retailers in particular, have been interested in the cross-over. In some ways, it may be that they're asking curators to come and do windows, they're trying to create that again, that resurgence of the spectacle or spectacular exhibition in some ways. You can understand that it is their way to differentiate themselves."

"It is to give some credence to what they do. I just did a studio visit with a museum designer last week who's been invited to do a really big Christmas display at Rinascente in Milan which is a fabulous luxury department store. You can't help but think back to what Thomas Heatherwick did for Harvey Nichols at the beginning of his career."

In light of these observations, a key finding is that guest collaborators play an increasing influential curatorial role in the enhancement of the brand experience in both types of luxury retailers. It was observed that the skill-set of exhibition curators was viewed as highly desirable as expert storytellers, display curators and designers of immersive experiences. The ability of the curator to transform brand narratives and stories into multi-sensory experiences suggests that they provide freshness and a different perspective that may not be possible to achieve internally.

Consequently, the employment of guest curators was identified to be due firstly, to the increasing emphasis on developing in-store, physical brand experiences akin to immersive, temporary exhibitions that stimulate, entertain and educate and secondly, the desire of luxury retailers to continually differentiate themselves and for the brand to remain fresh, relevant and innovative.

7.3. Findings Conclusion

The three findings chapters highlight the rich tapestry of findings observed in the research. The first findings chapter (Chapter 5) presents the observed evolution of consumer needs and trends, and how and why curation has become to be seen as relevant an a potentially valuable idea or concept in luxury retailing.

It was identified that consumers in the luxury retail environment wish for a heightened, multi-faceted, sensory type of experience, which not only enables them to shop, but also them to express their creativity and co-curate experiences seamlessly across multiple channels.

Luxury retailers have recognised this and are developing new types of omnichannel experiences, drawing upon the synergies between art and fashion and also the aura of cultural environments to influence and enhance brand experiences and offer new and differentiated types of value to the consumer. The concept of curation and curatorial activities, including collaborations, were identified to support and deliver differentiated brand experiences and in doing so, offer new forms of value.

The second findings chapter (Chapter 6) then turned towards observations regarding how the concept of curation is understood in luxury retailing and how this compares to the understanding in museums and exhibitions. It was identified that what was once a relatively simple, domain-specific concept has developed into a multi-dimensional and inter-disciplinary that defies a universal definition. The differing perspectives from both luxury retailing and cultural institutions were reviewed and compared.

A key finding was that it was recognised that curation is a popular term in industry and is one that is used to describe activities that are perceived to enhance the value and type of brand experience in luxury retailing. Whilst it was argued that application of the term curation in the luxury retail environment was inappropriate, pretentious and without merit by cultural institution professionals, as it did not provide any intellectual theory or value, it was presented by both luxury retailers and temporary exhibition curators that curation in the luxury retail environment provided other forms of value, such as experiential value to consumers, brand positioning value for luxury retailers and importantly, a route to competitive advantage and growth. This indicates that a key finding is that the curatorial activities in luxury retail are not based on or associated with the traditional, art-historian curatorial practices. Further, that scholarly subject matter expertise was not required to be a curator or undertake curatorial activities in luxury retailing.

A second key finding refers to that several fundamental differences exist between curation in temporary exhibitions and permanent collections, relating to, for example, an unmediated object-focus versus a co-curated experience-focus, scholarly expertise versus storytelling expertise and temporal differences.

A third key finding was that curatorial processes and activities in temporary exhibitions were identified to be more similar to curatorial activities in luxury retailing. Examples identified referred to the focus on the design and development of an immersive, multi-sensory and simultaneously entertaining and educational experience; the ability to edit, build and communicate a narrative in a powerful and memorable way; and the skill in curating different types of products or objects that evoked an emotional response and offered customers or visitors to participate and contribute to the experience. In addition, due to these similarities and the rise of collaborative curatorial projects, suggests that there is an increased blurring

between luxury retail and temporary exhibitions. This suggests that curation as a process, an activity and a discipline has evolved and can be understood looking through various contextual lenses. Therefore, no universal definition exists and in order to understand it, one must first appreciate and gain an understanding of the context or environment that one is in.

Building on the findings observed in Chapters 5 and 6, the third findings chapter, Chapter 7, focused on how curation is manifested and brought to life in luxury retailing practices and specifically, in the design and development of brand experience. This chapter presented the different observations regarding the types of curatorial activities, forms of curation and also the various curatorial roles across the two types of luxury retailers.

Seven key curatorial activities were identified in luxury retail. Whilst the curatorial activities differed in emphasis and level of importance across the two different types of luxury retailer; the SBLR and the MBLR, they were observed to be key steps in the design and development of brand experience. Influences on the types of curatorial activities found in each luxury retailer refer to the size and structure of the luxury retail organisation.

For example, Matchesfashion.com, an omnichannel MBLR, with 400 employees focuses on differentiating and positioning itself through a curated edit of over 400 brands online and across 4 physical stores supported by strong narratives and storytelling. Editorial curation plays a key part in supporting and reinforcing the brand position and differentiated market offer online, whereas more physical curation plays a part in the design and development of in-store installations and experiences.

Regarding Selfridges, who positions itself as a highly innovative ideas luxury retailer, the focus is more on curation of the brand itself, with the development of continual stream of powerful and impactful curated brand concepts that are disseminated down across all parts of the organisation. Brand curation, therefore, was observed to be the critical form of curatorial activity that drives and directs the overall brand experience, a route to competitive advantage and leads to increased sales and growth.

The different emphasis on curatorial activity was observed to impact the nature and type of curatorial roles. It was observed that different types of curatorial roles exist within the SBLR and MBLRs. In addition, it was identified the roles possessed different titles, ranging from formal titles to self-created names. The existence of both diversity of titles and recognition of curatorial responsibility, suggests firstly, that many professionals are engaged in curatorial activities in the design and development of brand experience yet this may not be reflected in more traditional, retailing organisational job role titles. An example of this was highlighted by the observation that in traditional, high street terminology, Joan Burstein, the founder of Browns Fashion, would be called a buyer. However, in today's world she would be called a

curator due to the nature of her curatorial focus and nature of work. Secondly, that there is a lack of formal recognition of luxury retailers being curators or being engaged in curatorial activities has led to the widespread different forms of adoption of the term.

A second key finding was that curatorial roles were observed to exist throughout the entire organisation, including the CEO through to sales associates on the shopfloor. Supportive functions were also identified to support curatorial activities, e.g. IT. Different curatorial activities were observed to support the design and development of brand experience in brand concept curation in senior roles, editorial curation in buying and brand communication roles, product and display curation in visual merchandising, store manager and sales associate roles and finally, storytelling and co-curation of experiences with consumers in sales associate roles. Guest curators or collaborators, supporting mainly editorial and physical curatorial activities, were also observed to be another type of role that contributed to the curatorial processes in the design and development of brand experience.

A third key finding was that due to curatorial activities taking place across the organisation, a network of different curatorial roles existed, each being connected to each other in varying degrees. The existence of team-based and multi-functional curatorial roles also highlighted that there does not exist one, omnipotent curator role, but rather curation in the luxury retail environment appears to be an integrated set of roles, all of which influence and contribute to the design and development of brand experience.

These findings, with specific reference to Chapter 7 and the focus on how the role of the curator influences the design and development of brand experience, are now examined in the context of the discussion chapter.

8. Discussion

8.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings outlined in three Finding Chapters 5, 6 and 7, with particular reference to the key findings in Chapter 7: as they relate directly to the research question. By comparing the findings with the literature, this chapter aims to address the research objectives, as outlined in Chapter 1.2 and the identified two gaps in the literature that relate to the research objectives as presented in Chapter 2.4. In addition, this chapter will highlight the areas where contributions to the literature are made and future research opportunities may lie.

The structure of the discussion chapter is in three sections, which reflect the research aim and objectives presented in Chapter 1.2. The first section relates to research objective number 1 and discusses the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation to luxury retailers.

The second section of the discussion chapter relates to research objective number 2 and focuses on how curation manifests itself in luxury retailing and influences the design and development of brand experience. The discussion concentrates on the identified seven curatorial activities, the different forms of curation across the two types of luxury retailers and also the observed similarities of curatorial practices within luxury retail and the cultural environment.

The third and final section of the discussion chapter relates to research objective number 3 and focuses on the various curatorial roles identified in luxury retail and how the type of curatorial role influences the design and development of brand experience. In addition, how curatorial roles may be influenced by the shape and size of luxury retail organisation.

8.2. Critical discussion Regarding the Role, Purpose and Value of Curation in Luxury Retailing

This section of the discussion chapter is concerned with the nature of the role of curation in the luxury retail environment and its meaning, purpose and value to luxury retailers. The meaning of the term curation was examined first in order to understand its role, purpose and value.

8.2.1. The Meaning of Curation in Luxury Retailing

The findings in Theme 6.1.1 highlight that the term curation is regularly used in the retail environment and has positive associations that are inferred on the brand and products sold. In addition, Themes 6.1.5, 6.1.6 and 6.1.7 illustrate how the participants understood the meaning of curation in luxury retailing to be different to curation in a cultural environment. Five key characteristics of curation of the luxury retail environment were observed and are outlined in Table 8.1. It was agreed by all luxury retailers that the meaning of curation in luxury retailing is shifting away from a scholarly, art historian contextual meaning, of one that refers to scholarly research, preservation and management of artefacts (and one described in Chapter 2.3.2, Table 2.6). This was illustrated by the finding in Theme 6.1.10 that scholarly subject matter expertise is neither associated with, nor a key requirement, for curation in luxury retailing.

However, a shared meaning of curation across the two environments was identified in Theme 6.1.9 regarding education. It was observed that participants from both luxury and cultural environments perceived education of customers or visitors to be a competitive differentiator, indicating that there is a shared interpretation regarding the meaning of curation. This will be examined in the discussion of the role, purpose and value of curation at a later point in this chapter.

Table 8.1 highlights the different perspectives regarding the meaning of curation and a summary of how this relates to the literature, which is now discussed.

Table 8.1: Contextual Understanding of the Meaning of Curation

Meaning	Understanding of the Meaning of Curation in Luxury Retailing by Luxury Retailer Participants	How the Meaning of Curation Compares in Luxury Retail and Cultural Institutions by both Luxury Retailer and Cultural Participants	Comparison of the Luxury Retailer Meaning of Curation to the Literature
Origins and Evolution	Curation is moving away from the traditional art-historian meaning of scholarly preservation of artefacts to an experience focus (Theme 6.1.2)	Regarding Temporary Exhibitions, the meaning of curation is evolving and moving away from the traditional art-historian meaning of scholarly preservation of artefacts to an experience focus as it is in luxury retail (and resulting in an increase in collaborations between the two environments) Regarding Permanent Collections, curation is object-focused and focuses on the preservation of and education about artefacts	Conflicts with the brand literature (which focuses only on sole brand luxury retailers). Despite the existing brand literature acknowledging the importance of experience, when referring to curation and related museological techniques (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011) it refers to a more traditional perspective and meaning of curation which is object-focused and the customer takes a more passive role (e.g. Ames, 1992; Horie, 1986). This suggests that the meaning of curation for sole brand luxury retailers in terms of experience differs, as it is similar to that of a contemplative permanent collection approach.
Expertise	Curation in luxury retailing does not require scholarly subject matter expertise but rather is more practical and creative (Theme 6.1.10)	There is a shared understanding by both luxury retailers and cultural professionals that the ability and expertise to curate and present new and compelling information to educate customers or visitors is perceived to be a competitive differentiator by both the luxury retailer and the cultural institution	Conflicts with the traditional curation museology literature (e.g. Horie, 1986; Ames, 1992) but supports perspectives 3-5 regarding curation (Chapter 2.3.2. Table 2.6). The brand literature does not refer to scholarly expertise but does refer to the authority and expertise of the artistic director (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011).
Focus	Curation focuses on designing and delivering a positive brand experience to the customer (as a means of differentiation and a route to competitive advantage) (Theme 6.1.3)	For Temporary Exhibitions, curation focuses on designing and developing an immersive experience For Permanent Collections, curation focuses on the education of visitors by providing intellectual value and theory to an exhibition or collection	Not focused on in the brand literature and therefore a new contribution. Joy et al (2014) only refer to curation as a process of acquisition, care, research, exhibition, design, layout, and the imagining and construction of discourses that support the creation of a "M(Art)World" and not a brand experience per se.
Pace	Curation is fast paced as it is driven by seasonal objectives and short-term sales targets as new brand experiences are required seasonally (Theme 6.1.4)	The pace of developed curated content and concepts is driven by trends and opportunities in both Temporary Exhibitions and luxury retailing. The pace of curation in Permanent Collections is determined by museum policy, objectives and funding	Not examined in the literature and therefore is a new contribution.
Process	The meaning of curation is to create a link between things (products, brands, installations, stories) that connects everything to create an experience (Theme 6.1.3)	For Temporary Ideas-Led Exhibitions, the meaning of curation is a term that refers to a process of developing an experience in any context and about any subject matter. For Permanent Collections, the meaning of curation refers to a process that is concerned with research, subject matter expertise and education and adds intellectual value	Concurs with the meaning of curation process for temporary ideas-led exhibitions (e.g. Roppola, 2014; Lord, 2014; Arnold, 2009; Kaniari, 2015). Goes beyond Joy et al's (2014) description of the process of curation.

In the brand literature presented in Chapter 2.3, three perspectives regarding curation and museum-related curatorial activities were identified (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011 and Kapferer, 2015), yet all refer to SBLRs and none of them attempt to describe the meaning or even the different facets of the meaning of the term curation in luxury retailing. Instead, references to curation are made through the lens of a new hybrid store-cultural institution business model (Joy et al, 2014), in the context of the artistic director of the sole luxury brand who curates the brand ideology and vision (Dion and Arnould (2011) or sales

people in stores who are curators as they transmit the brand ideology deliver the curated brand experience to the customer. These roles will be discussed in the third section of this discussion chapter, which examines curatorial roles in luxury retailing. However, it remains that there is little discussion regarding a contextual understanding or the broader meaning of the term curation in the literature.

Regarding the origins and evolution of the meaning of curation, the finding that there is a shift away from the traditional art-historian, artefact-focused meaning and understanding of curation contradicts the perspective presented by Horie (1986) and Ames (1992) who state that the activities and processes of the 18th/19th century curator exist. It is acknowledged, nevertheless, that this perspective is over 20 years old. However, as noted in Table 8.1, similarities may be drawn between Joy et al's (2014) description of curation and this perspective. Firstly, with regards to the emphasis on the collection and care of objects by an authoritative expert, which in the luxury retailer perspective, is both the luxury retail organisation itself and/or the artistic director. Secondly, as outlined in Chapter 7.2.1.2, participation and mediation are limited in light of the regimented nature of the delivery of the brand experience, with sales employees focusing on communication of considered brand messages that support a more contemplative experience and one that is more passive for the customer. This suggests that despite sole luxury brand retailers focusing on the delivery of an experience, it may relate to the more traditional curatorial principles of a permanent art collection than that of a curatorial practices found in a temporary ideas-led exhibition.

However, the finding that curation is evolving does support the third perspective of curation presented in Table 2.6. For example, Boylan (2011) proposes that curation is evolving from the traditional art-historian type of curation as curators can no longer just present historical, intellectual expertise and theory passively and instead need to embrace opportunities to mediate visitor interpretation. This finding also supports the perspective presented by O'Neill (2012), Freitas (2011), Edmonds et al (2009) and Kreps (2011) that curation is evolving towards a distinct practice of mediation that plays a connecting role between people and objects. Finally, the finding also supports the perspective of Roppola (2014), Lord (2014) and Simon (2010) that curation is shifting away from an art-historian associated meaning to one that is focused on connecting people and the content on display through the design and development of a fully participative experience. The emphasis on the design and development of an immersive experience, rather than a contemplative one which focuses on objects per se, is one that was also identified in Theme 6.1.3, which highlights that luxury retailers curate through storytelling and editing in order to develop a narrative and a multi-sensory experience that connects customers with the content. This finding also supports the observations in the brand literature that luxury retailers are moving away from static store experiences to interactive, multi-sensory brand experiences (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver 2015; Atwal and Williams, 2009 and Tynan et al, 2010).

Regarding the finding that the meaning of curation does not depend on scholarly expertise, this is not discussed in the brand literature, but does support the more recent perspectives on curation in the museology literature, which highlights the interdisciplinary nature of curation in temporary ideas-led exhibitions (e.g. Table 2.6). However, it is noted that there is another similarity between the emphasis on expertise of the curator as advocated by the traditional art-historian, permanent collection view and the expertise of the artistic director in SBLRs. With regards to the findings regarding focus (6.1.3) and pace (6.1.4) of curation in luxury retail, these findings are not discussed in the existing brand literature and therefore, it is suggested that they are contributions to the literature regarding a new form of curation.

Finally, the finding in 6.1.3 that the process of curation is concerned with creating a link between objects through a concept or theme to create an immersive experience is also one that is not discussed in the literature and makes a new contribution. However, this finding does go beyond Joy et al's (2014) description of curation as a process (which is based on a SBLR's attempt to become a "M(Art)World", suggesting that the processes may differ between the MBLRs and SBLRs, or that the SBLR meaning of curation is more aligned with the traditional curator perspective.

Drawing upon the identified different meanings of curation, the role and purpose of curation are now discussed.

8.2.2. The Role, Purpose and Value of Curation

8.2.2.1. The Role of Curation as a Means of Differentiation

The findings highlighted that for both the SBLR and the MBLR, curation was observed to be a means of differentiation for the brand regarding the design and development of a brand experience and a route to increased footfall, sales and competitive advantage. Curation was commented on as a means to develop a differentiated experience by the creating a form of conceptual, thematic or ideological link that shapes and guides the development of a holistic experience, as stated, for example by R2:

"It is about creating a link between things – like creating a magic or power that links everything together in an experience."

The findings in Themes 6 and 7 highlight that curation is a process or modus operandi that consists of a series of activities driven by different roles across the luxury retail organisation that link products together and develop an integrated brand story and experience. The development of a curated concept or theme to deliver a differentiated, holistic brand

experience supports the brand literature (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Rayburn and Voss, 2013; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Kozinets et al, 2002) and highlights a similarity with the way in which temporary ideas-led exhibitions are curated (Arnold, 2009), seen in Chapter 2.3.1.2, Table 2.5. It was, however, observed that the nature of differentiation and role of curation to support the differentiation strategy was influenced by the size and strategic focus of the organisation, for example, those luxury retailers with an omnichannel focus or a smaller footprint emphasised that the role of curation was to develop a highly curated edit that would differentiate their offer. Whereas the largest MBLR focused on curated brand concepts that would be transformed into storewide differentiated brand experiences.

With regards to being a means to create a differentiated experience for the SBLR, the role and purpose of curation was observed to: firstly, ensure that the brand ideology and vision is consistent through physical curation (also, therefore serving as a form of brand risk management); secondly, to inject and rejuvenate the heritage brand through artistic guest curatorial activities; and, thirdly, to deliver curated brand experiences through sales associates. Findings in Themes 1, 2 and 3 indicate, and concur with the literature (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Dion and Arnould, 2011) that art has become fashionable and is being used as a means of differentiation for SBLRs. The findings support the literature that states luxury retailers are linking art with luxury, "putting luxury at the forefront of contemporaneity" (Kapferer, 2015: p.82) and using art associations and trait transference to elevate the importance and value of the luxury brand and products (e.g. Hagtvegt and Patrick, 2008; Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Balzer and Sulksy, 1992).

Nonetheless, the findings also highlight that not all luxury retailers, e.g. MBLRs, have specific goals to become hybrid institutions. Nor do they necessarily use art to create distance to gain depth and elevation, as described by Dion and Arnould (2011) and/or as a differentiation strategy as described by Kapferer (2015) as "Artification", as outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2. The findings in Theme 3 illustrate that whilst the sole luxury brand retailer tends to borrow the aura of museums with regards to architecture, the art of display and the collaborations with artists to create a climate of reverence and elevate the status of the branded products, the role of curation in multi brand luxury retail stores differs.

The role of curation as a means of differentiation for MBLRs was observed to support the proposition of a unique edit of luxury brands, supporting omnichannel strategies through curated brand concepts, physical displays and participative experiences. The relationship with art was observed in Theme 4 to be due to luxury retailers recognising that it is fashionable and also by adding art and culture, created more depth, education and entertainment to the curated brand concepts and experiences, but was not employed to elevate the value or differentiation of a sole brand per se. This can be observed by examining the nature and type of MBLR collaborations with cultural curators, outlined in the

findings in Themes 4 and 7, who do not work in museums with permanent collections, but rather in temporary, idea-led exhibitions. Unlike the SBLR artist collaborators, the temporary exhibition curators were not employed by MBLRs for art expertise or for being artists themselves. Rather, they were employed to draw on their skills regarding the development of a concept that taps into trends and the curation of a narrative or story that physically links objects to create an immersive experience, as found in a temporary idea-led exhibition, outlined in Chapter 2.3.1.2. The role of curation as a means of differentiation, therefore, in the MBLR context is not to support it becoming a hybrid art-focused "M(Art)World" institution, as presented by Joy et al (2014), or pursue an "Artification" strategy as presented by Kapferer (2015), but rather to offer a uniquely edited online and physical experience that both educates and entertains. Therefore, this research recognises the differences between the different usage of art and artists as a means of differentiation for the SBLR and MBLR. It also acknowledges that the role of curation as a means of differentiation differs between the two types of luxury retailers, recognising that the nature of the curated experience also differs.

With regards to the role of curation as a means of differentiation to design and develop a seamless online and physical experience that educates and entertains, it is proposed that the findings offer a second contribution to the brand literature. Whilst the brand literature is extensive regarding the development of brand experiences (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Moore and Lochhead, 1998; Schmitt, 1999; Kozinets et al, 2002; Brakus et al, 2000) it is acknowledged by Seo and Oliver (2015) that luxury brand experiences have not been defined and there is considerable scope for research. Moreover, whilst Tynan et al (2010) recognise that luxury brand experiences enhance the value of luxury brands and Gistri et al (2009) claim that the hedonic nature of luxury brands enables customers to gain a type of gratification that is unobtainable from non-luxury brands, there is little in the literature beyond this that connects the role of curation with the process of designing and developing a luxury brand experience, which is now discussed.

Findings in Theme 3 highlight that both types of luxury retailer recognise that in the context of online growth, stores are physical spaces which offer immersive brand experiences and brand touch-point opportunities rather than just sales opportunities. This finding supports the literature which refers to the physical store as a critical opportunity to deliver a powerful, multi-sensory experience, representing a physical representation of the brand and where emotional associations are struck (e.g. Brynjolksson et al, 2013; Brun and Castelli, 2008; Bonetti, 2014; Naylor et al, 2008; Lindstrom, 2005a; Moore and Doherty, 2007; Morrison and Crane, 2007).

It was also observed that retailers acknowledge that customers also expect to be entertained and educated in Theme 1.2 and therefore physical brand experiences need to delight customers by the provision of a blend of theatre and education. This finding concurs with the

brand and experiential marketing literature that consumers are not just seeking to purchase products and services, but also emotional experiences (e.g. Ratneshwar and Mick, 2005; Schmitt, 1999; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011), that their needs are both rational and emotional and vary throughout the brand experience, and that different types of stimulation are required for a positive brand experience (e.g. Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012, Pine and Gilmore, 1998).

The finding that luxury retailers believe customers wish to be simultaneously educated and entertained also supports both Atwal and Williams (2009) and Pine and Gilmore's (1998) claims that firstly, consumers seek pleasurable experiences and secondly, the richest and most pleasurable brand experience occurs when a consumer is able to participate across four elements of brand experiences (educational, entertainment, escapist and esthetic), therefore meeting rational and emotional needs and providing both rational and emotional value.

Education was identified in the findings to be linked to the role of curation, both in the luxury retail environment and the cultural environment as a means of differentiation. It was observed in Theme 6.1.9 that a key element of the role of curation is concerned with education and providing a distinct point of view, regarding the education of customers about new brands and products, or educating visitors about an exhibition subject or collection. For example, a curated edit and collection of new brands or upcoming designers that no other luxury retailer offered would serve to differentiate the MBLR as both an innovator and also an educator of the customer. Similarly, education in a cultural institution was observed to be its purpose and key objective and therefore, the standard of the informed point of view provided by the cultural institution was also perceived to be an important basis of differentiation and reflection on the cultural institution brand itself.

However, unlike luxury retailers and temporary exhibition curators who observed education being associated with and part of the overall customer or visitor experience and therefore part of emotional value derived from the experience, museums with permanent collections associated subject matter expertise and the level of education with the provision of intellectual value and theory. It was commented that as curation in luxury retailing did not possess scholarly or academic subject matter expertise, it was not therefore perceived to be true curation as it did not provide any form of intellectual value. The different observations regarding the value derived from curation are discussed now in 8.2.2.2.

To conclude, these findings represent a new contribution to the brand literature as the role and purpose of curation in luxury retail as a means of differentiation and route to competitive advantage and a new path to growth has received scant attention to date. Joy et al (2014) do acknowledge that curation is one of three processes that are critical to the development of a luxury brand experience, yet the authors do not examine the characteristics of the process in

detail, nor do they compare how the role and therefore, process, of curation may vary across different types of luxury retailers with differing outcomes.

8.2.2.2. The Value of Curation

The perception of value of curation in luxury retailing was observed to differ from cultural institution professionals, who, as stated above, argued that curation in luxury retail could not be defined as curation as it did not provide any intellectual value. In addition, in Theme 3, cultural institution professionals also stated that luxury retailers, in particular SBLRs, are attempting to increase the value of the brand and hide the fact that products are no longer handmade but are mass-manufactured through the development of artisan stories that are connected to the brand.

The use of curated artisan stories and experiences by luxury retailers to support and add value to a sole luxury brand supports Kapferer's (2015: p. 76) argument that luxury retailers are using "artification" as a way to circumvent a number of issues (e.g. the dilemma of growth and over-exposure of the heritage luxury brand and also the need to retain the original artisanal story in a sector that is increasingly less artisanal in the face of this growth and mass production) and, add value, by presenting the brand as an "advanced cultural agent" and "producing a continually renewing contemporary image of a heritage brand" in the luxury market. However, unlike the cultural professionals who stated that the portrayal of an artisan being linked to the luxury brand is a superficial way to enhance the value of a product, Kapferer (2015: p.79) claims that "artification is not varnish" and represents a strategic transformation.

With regards to how the value of curation was perceived by luxury retailers, whilst the absence of intellectual value was not highlighted or referenced as an important issue by the luxury retailers, three forms of value were, which are now discussed.

The first form of value identified refers to the value curation provides to the organisation. It was observed in Theme 6 that as the curated edit is the main point of strategic difference for the luxury retailer, curation is one of five organisational 'pillars' for one MBLR, which were described by R1 as organisation-wide goals that influence all departments and keep everyone on track. Ensuring alignment within the organisation and also serving as a form of brand risk management by eliminating any activities that may damage the brand, by way of a curated edit, was also observed to be a form of brand risk management, for example the "sieving" or filtering of ideas and brand concepts out that may damage the brand. A further example of how curation is adding value from an organisational perspective was observed in Theme 6, as it was also noted that the ability to curate influences recruitment decisions within the organisation, particularly with sales associates.

Whilst the value of brand values and corporate objectives are extensively examined in management literature, the role of curation as a form of organisational value to a luxury retailer has received very little coverage in the literature and therefore it is suggested that this is a finding that is new to the literature would benefit from further research.

The second form of value that curation provides and is referred to in the findings is financial. Themes 8 and 9 refer to how curated concepts and experiences resulted in an increase in both footfall to stores and sales for the luxury retailer, indicating that curation is a means to not only gain the competitive advantage, but also drives profitability and growth. In Theme 9, R4, for example, described the value of curated brand concepts:

"It's a major point of difference with curation when it comes to brand stuff, it's competition. You're making a big profit off these ideas, whereas if you're a publicly funded gallery, it's not like 'holy shit, we're going to lose £500 million if someone who is in direct competition with us does the same idea'".

It was, however, acknowledged, that no specific measurement had been taken, nor any method of evaluation adopted regarding measurement of the financial contribution. Whilst Holt (2004) claims that organisations that focus on customer experience are more profitable and successful than others, due to them forging very close bonds with customers through positive brand experiences, the literature does not, however, relate this to curation. In the literature, the power of the brand and brand equity are linked to the financial value of an organisation in the literature (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Keller, 1993; Blackson, 2000) however, curation has not been associated with these concepts in the literature to date.

In addition, the influence and impact of financial considerations and objectives on the role of curation in luxury retailing were also highlighted in Theme 6.1.8, yet are not explored or discussed in the literature. Therefore, the findings that there is a relationship between financial considerations and curation and that curation may add or contribute to brand equity or profitability, signifies an addition to the literature. However, it is suggested that it is a contribution that would benefit from further and more focused examination on the financial implications of curatorial activity and the measurement of how curation turns into revenue.

The third form of value that curation provides was referred to in Themes 3, 8 and 9 as experiential value in terms of the development and delivery of a curated, immersive and multi-sensory experience experienced by the customer. Respondents from both types of luxury retailers referred to the value that customers seek as being immersive and emotional. Words used to describe the value that customers derive from a curated brand experience included: a feeling of desire (Theme 3.3); experiencing the delight of, or gaining insight about,

something new (Theme 8); feeling of being excited (Theme 8); and, feeling really delighted and entertained (Theme 9).

Whilst there is considerable coverage in the literature regarding the value and benefit of organisations generating emotional experiences for customers regarding increased brand loyalty, enhanced brand equity and long-term competitive advantage (e.g. Sullivan and Heitmeyer, 2008; Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Kozinets et al, 2002; Brakus et al, 2009), there is little, again, in the literature that focuses on the role of curation and how luxury retailers design curated brand experiences and deliver this value. The focus in the literature is observed to be on more discrete areas that include the key elements required to develop a brand experience, for example: the set of affective, emotional and behavourial dimensions required to develop an experience (e.g. Schmitt, 1999; Brakus et al, 2009; Fulberg, 2003; Berry et al, 2006; Franzen and Moriarity, 2009); the need to develop themed experiences (e.g. Kotler, 1974; Schmitt, 1999; Pine and Gilmore, 1998; Kozinets et al, 2002; Atwal and Williams, 2009); the need to build strong relationships with customers and develop a compelling ideology (e.g. Holt, 2004; Lundqvist et al, 2013); the need to establish emotional connections between the brand and the customer (e.g. Atwal and Williams, 2009; de Chernatony et al, 2010; Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008; Keller, 2003); the importance of connecting the physical vision of the brand with the relational vision (Morrison and Crane, 2007); the need to co-create value with customers (e.g. Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014) and, finally, the need to design experiences that are congruent with brand values (Steenburg and Spears, 2011).

It is suggested, however, that all of these different perspectives on how to create emotional brand experiences are valid and relate to the curatorial steps and activities identified in the research for both luxury retail, and also temporary exhibitions in the museology literature (Roppola, 2014). Curation, as a series of activities, was observed in the findings to integrate these requirements. For example, through the development of compelling brand concepts that tap into trends but also underpin brand values, powerful storytelling that evokes emotions, supports and illuminates the physical curated display and motivates behavior, and finally, through the presentation of opportunities to learn, participate and co-create the brand experience. It is suggested, therefore, that the finding that luxury retailers are using a series of curatorial activities as a modus operandi to design and develop a brand experience holistically and in an integrated manner contributes to the existing body of research in the literature.

The nature of the curatorial activities and how they manifest themselves within luxury retailing to design and develop luxury brand experiences is further examined and discussed in the next, second section of discussion.

8.2.2.3. Conclusion

This first discussion section has attempted to highlight the various meanings and interpretations of the term curation in luxury retailing today. The findings present a number of new additions and contributions to the literature in light of the role and purpose of curation in luxury retail having received scant attention in the literature to date. Most importantly, these findings are presented as a first step in understanding how curation is being adopted by luxury retailers to develop and deliver luxury brand experiences.

The first contribution to the literature is that curation is evolving away from the traditional art-historian meaning that is focused on objects and artefacts, to one that is mediated and experience-centric and emerging as a new discipline of curation. The implications are firstly, that this finding helps to build awareness and understanding that luxury retail curation is a form of curation in its own right and secondly, from a managerial perspective, there is an acknowledgement of the curatorial skills that are required or need to be developed in the organisation and the luxury retail environment. In addition, the findings add to the existing brand literature which describes curation only in the context of a sole brand luxury retail environment and with references to the traditional art-historian perspective of curation. These findings represent a first step towards greater understanding of the complexity of the role of curation in light of the different types of luxury retailers and act as a springboard for further research into the nature and landscape of curation in luxury retailing and the impact it has on the luxury retail environment.

A second contribution to the literature is that the role of curation is perceived as a means of differentiation and a route to competitive advantage. Adoption of a curation strategy empowers luxury retailers to position themselves more effectively than competitiors to meet customer needs (Porter, 1997). Curation enables luxury retailers to impart value to consumers more effectively than competitors by creating unique concepts that link a highly covetable selection of innovative brands or products through a compelling narrative that communicates a distinct point of view and is brought to life in a curated store or online environment that educates and entertains, resulting in a superior, differentiated brand experience that sets it apart from its competitors. This strategy not only increases brand loyalty and perceived added value, it also increases profit margins (Porter, 1997). Education of customers about new and innovative products and brands through the curated brand experience was identified as a key role of curation and contributor towards sustaining a differentiation strategy for both types of luxury retailer. However, it was observed that education may differ depending on the type of luxury retailer, e.g. sole brand centric education regarding the provenance and heritage in SBLRs and multi brand-centric education regarding new brands that have been bought as part of a curated edit.

The findings highlighted that the means of differentiation differs for a SBLR and a MBLR due to their two different strategic focuses, as outlined in the typology of luxury retailers in Chapter 2.1.2, which influences the delivery of curated experiences in the two environments. SBLRs have increasingly associated themselves with art and artist collaborations to elevate and rejuvenate the sole luxury heritage brand, and the role of curation supports this art-focused and trait transference strategy which concurs with the literature (e.g. Chapter 2.3.3.1). However, MBLRs are not necessarily adopting a strategy of "artification", described by Kapferer (2015) as a method of differentiation, and consequently, the role of curation differs as it focuses on connecting multiple brands, concepts and stories to deliver an experience. For MBLRs, the role of curation as a means of differentiation was observed to be focused on designing and developing brand experiences that connect brands by curating concepts, stories and physical displays in a way that educate and entertain. This suggests that despite the luxury retail curation being experience-centric, due to the different emphasis placed on the means of differentiation, curatorial activities and the nature of the curated experiences may differ between the two types of luxury retailer. For example, the SBLR's association with art suggest curated experiences may be similar to permanent exhibition form of curation and the MBLR may be more similar to the temporary ideas-led exhibition form of curation.

A third contribution presented refers to the identification of three new forms of value of curation. The first form of value refers to curation as an organisational pillar or guidepost that navigates the strategic direction of the company and adding value in terms of cohesiveness and delivery of a holistic brand experience. It also serves as a form of brand risk management to ensure that brand concepts that may damage the brand are "sieved" or filtered out and not implemented. The second form of value refers to the financial contribution of curation in terms of the increase in sales and profitability that is generated from curated brand concepts and brand experiences and resulting increase in consumer expenditure. The third form of value refers to the experiential and emotional value that luxury retailers offer customers by delivering a curated multi-sensory luxury brand experience that meets and fulfills their emotional needs, resulting in increased brand loyalty, brand equity and competitive advantage.

To conclude, this chapter has addressed the first research objective regarding the role, purpose and value of curation for luxury brand retailers. It has been highlighted that curation has a key part to play in the design and development of luxury brand experiences, luxury specifically being an area that has received limited coverage to date. The role of curation in the context of luxury retailing is observed to be on two levels, strategic and operational. On a strategic level, it is a means of differentiation and therefore a route to competitive advantage and a new path to growth. On an operational level, curation is a modus operandi to link between the design and development of concepts, connecting physical and non-physical elements through storytelling and display to create a multi-sensory, immersive experience,

and also a brand risk management tool, as outlined in Table 8.2. The nature in which curation manifests itself as a modus operandi or series of activities in the design and development of a luxury brand experience is now examined in the next chapter of discussion.

Table 8.2: Curation in Luxury Retail: Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research

Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research – The Meaning, Role, Purpose and Value of Curation in Luxury Retail	
Meaning of Luxury Retail Curation	
Evolved away from the traditional, art-historian perspective of curation in museology literature	Supports museology literature perspectives 4 and 5 – Chapter 2.3.2. Table 2.6 (e.g. Roppola, 2014)
Experience-centric for sole brand and multi brand luxury retailers	Goes beyond existing brand literature (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kapferer, 2015) which focuses only on sole brand luxury retailers New contribution and area for future research
Modus operandi of developing and creating a link between concepts and products, connecting physical and non-physical elements to deliver a multi-sensory experience	Goes beyond existing brand literature (Joy et al, 2014) as a process involving acquisition, care and research. New contribution to the brand literature and a suggested area for future research Supports meaning of curation in the museology literature (Arnold, 2009)
Focuses on mediation of understanding	Supports museology literature perspectives 4 and 5 – Chapter 2.3.2. Table 2.6 (e.g. Roppola, 2014; Simon, 2010) New contribution and area for future research
Role and Purpose of Curation	
For sole brand luxury retailers	
Through the medium of art	Supports the literature (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Dion and Arnold, 2011)
Brand-centric curated brand experiences (to reflect the provenance, heritage and quality of the sole brand)	Contributes to the existing literature regarding the existing gap describing luxury brand experiences (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015)
For multi brand luxury retailers	
Through the medium of ideas, concepts and themes	Adds to the literature (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Rayburn and Voss, 2013)
Concept-centric curated brand experiences (concept or theme of the multi brand experience that unites the multiple brands)	Contributes to the existing literature regarding the existing gap describing luxury brand experiences (e.g. Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015)
Value of Curation	
Organisational: on two levels: 1. Strategic level: means of differentiation, route to increase footfall and sales, competitive advantage and path to growth 2. Operational level: as an organisational anchor or guidepost to add cohesiveness, ensure experience is holistic and consistent. Also serves as a brand risk management tool as a filter or "sieve" to ensure activities that may damage the brand are not further developed or implemented	New contribution and area for future research
Financial – curated experiences are commercial in nature and are perceived to motivate and encourage consumer spending, increase brand loyalty and equity	New contribution and area for future research
Experiential – curated experiences are perceived to add value to the customer	New contribution and area for future research

8.3. Critical Discussion Regarding How Curation Manifests Itself in Luxury Retailing

The second section of the discussion chapter builds on Chapter 8.2 regarding how curation is manifested in luxury retailing and influences the design and development of brand experience.

The discussion concentrates on the identified seven curatorial activities and the four forms of curation and draws substantially on Theme 8 as it contains the key findings regarding the activities and forms of curation observed across the luxury retailers.

8.3.1. Four Forms of Curation

The findings in Theme 8 highlight that seven key curatorial activities exist in the luxury retailing organisations examined. The seven curatorial activities were observed to be a series of sequential steps when designing and developing a brand experience as outlined in Table 8.3 below. It was observed, however, that different luxury retailers emphasised and elaborated more strongly on some curatorial activities than others, depending on the nature and type of organisation.

Table 8.3: Four Forms of Curation in Luxury Retail

Identified Curatorial Practices in Luxury Retail	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**
	Research	**Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts**	**Acquiring Knowledge**	**Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View**	**Art of Display**	**Storytelling**	**Experience**
Definitions	Identification of ideas that reinforce the brand identity and vision	Filtering and Development of Ideas and Concepts to Enhance the Brand Position and Differentiation of the Luxury Retailer	Seeking and Drawing Upon Knowledge to Strengthen the Idea or Concept e.g. through Collaboration and Partnership	Selection, Editing, Theme or Concept Platform Building	Arrangement and Presentation of Products and Design of the Environment Display	Communication of the Curated Concept Content Through a Story Narrative	Co-creation of experiences with customers
Form of Curation in Luxury Retail	**Brand Curation**			**Editorial Curation**	**Physical Curation**	**Relational Curation**	
Design and Development of a Luxury Brand Experience							

The four types of curation are now discussed in turn.

8.3.1.1. Brand Curation – The Blueprint of the Luxury Brand Experience

Brand curation was observed to constitute three curatorial activities that relate to the design and development of concepts. Brand concepts were identified to be the product of research and the aggregation and distillation of core ideas, patterns and trends that provide the blueprint of brand experience design and development. The three curatorial activities observed refer to firstly, the researching of ideas, patterns and trends; secondly, the filtering and development of ideas to develop brand concepts; and thirdly, the acquisition of additional knowledge to reinforce the curated brand concept, for example, collaborations with art and cultural environments. It was observed that for luxury retailers, the curated brand concept acts as a blueprint and sets the direction for the sequential steps of the design and development of the luxury brand experience. A similarity between these three curatorial activities and temporary exhibition curatorial activities was commented on. However, it was stated that in the context of SBLR luxury retail, the filtering step was strongly influenced by the existing brand identity, position and ideology. As highlighted in the findings in Theme 8, words such as “sieving” and “championing” were observed in the context that the brand identity of the luxury retailer was the main filter of ideas and would determine the life and development of a brand concept. R4 provides an example:

"Working for a brand like Selfridges, it's a totally different kind of curation because you're sieving – the sieve is Selfridges. So you're not curating based on necessarily a pure idea, it's the idea and Selfridges or (the idea) is filtered through the brand."

Whilst the literature acknowledges that brands may be organised by brand concepts (Park et al, 1986) and that brand themes or concepts are developed by organisations to help the positioning and framing of the brand positively in the mind of the customer through constructed brand realities (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Kapferer and Bastien, 2008; Kozinets et al, 2002), little exists that connects the development of brand concepts with curation, or as a blueprint or the first step in the design and development of a luxury brand experience. In addition, little exists in the literature that connects brand curation as a brand risk management mechanism by filtering and "sieving" concepts that may damage the brand. This suggests that the finding that curated brand concepts, developed by three joined-up, curatorial activities, contribute to the design and development of a luxury brand experience and makes a new contribution to the literature.

However, the findings do concur with the literature that in terms of brand concepts, constructed realities are being developed with a management-centric perspective (Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012). The finding that luxury retailers, as outlined in the example above, are using the brand as a "sieving" filter suggest that brand curation is driven by managerial-centric interpretations and perspectives of the brand ideology and identity and do not involve co-creation with customers at this point in the curatorial process.

Drawing upon museology literature and Roppola's (2014) Relational Model, it is possible to relate brand curation to a concept, which is a blueprint for a constructed reality in the form of a luxury brand experience, to the Framing process in the design of an experience. Roppola (2014) states that the Framing process refers to how organisations construct a reality by creating a concept that harmonises the individual (customer) and organisational (brand) frames. The constructed reality or "frame" provides a context for the designed experience, enabling people to make sense of it, and understand how it reinforces the brand values of the brand (Roppola, 2014).

This suggests that the development of brand concepts, as blueprints for luxury brand experiences, may be observed to be a framing activity and a way to bring to life the brand values to the customer, suggesting that the findings concur with and support Roppola's (2014) Relational Model. The brand concept as a harmonising frame that communicates ideas whilst reinforcing the brand values in a way that is congruent with those of the customer, also concurs with the brand literature. As presented in Chapter 2, the literature claims that retailers attempt to create experiences that both communicate the brand ideology and brand values and are harmonious with the values of the customer (e.g. Joy et al, 2014;

Holt, 2004; de Chernatony et al, 2010; Steenburg and Spears, 2011; Pine and Gilmore, 1998). In addition, the finding that the curated brand concept, as a blueprint of the brand experience, directs all of elements of the brand experience so that they are congruent both internally (within the organisation) and externally (the customer) supports the literature (Chevalier and Mazzalovo, 2008).

Further, the findings also support Roppola's (2014) reference that frames, or in this context, brand concepts, are being guided and directed by the luxury brand values. An example being R4's description of "sieving" new ideas when developing brand concepts. R4 states that the development of brand concepts is not based on "pure ideas", but instead is influenced by the luxury retailer brand and what it stands for. This suggests that the brand values of the luxury retailer brand are being used as a sieve or filter to determine the type and nature of brand concepts that are developed, which concurs with the literature (Srivastrava et al, 1998).

Further, as outlined by findings in Theme 6 not only are the brand values being used to determine the nature of the brand concept, they are also being instilled throughout the organisation as internal way finding codes to support the luxury brand experience. For example, as described in Theme 8, in the case of Selfridges, considerable effort is taken to educate both the buyers and delivery teams to ensure the brand concept is fully understood and the brand experience is delivered consistently. However, whilst coverage in the literature is extensive regarding the role of brand values internally and externally to the organisation to provide a consistent brand experience and holistic customer experience (e.g. Aaker, 1997; Keller, 2007; Kozinets, 2002; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Verhoef et al, 2009), there is little connection made between curation and brand values in the context of developing a luxury brand experience. This suggests that the findings contribute to the literature and present a new opportunity for future research.

A final consideration for discussion refers to the third curatorial activity in brand curation, the acquisition of knowledge to strengthen the brand concept through collaboration and partnership. As presented in Themes 4 and 7, the nature and rationale of the employment of collaborators was observed to add value by bringing a fresh perspective, deeper meaning or a new narrative or aesthetic to enhance the brand concept or experience. C5, who described her multiple collaborations with luxury retailers, stated that:

"It gives a freshness and knowledge that you wouldn't get if you only used your own staff. So you can do something with people from outside the brand experience, that people inside the brand would never think of doing."

The finding that luxury retailers are collaborating with temporary exhibition curators in the curation of brand concepts suggests that luxury retailers are responding to the fast-paced

nature of luxury retail and the need to continually offer something new as a means of differentiation, as described in Theme 5. However, the linkage between collaboration between luxury retailers and temporary exhibition curators to curate brand concepts is not examined in the literature. Nor is the evolving similarity of brand experience design objectives and skills in luxury retail and temporary exhibitions, suggesting a new finding and contribution to the brand literature. However, this finding does support the museology literature regarding the role of the exhibition curator evolving into one that is focused on developing immersive experiences which are editorial in nature, fast paced and focused on thematic concepts like a magazine and help mediate understanding (e.g. Simon, 2010; Roppola, 2014).

Following the acquisition of additional knowledge to enhance the curated brand concept and provide new insights, luxury retailers described the next step of curation as being editorial in nature. Editorial curation was observed to focus on building the platform for the brand concept, which is now discussed.

8.3.1.2. Editorial Curation – The Content of the Luxury Brand Experience

Editorial curation is a term that has been developed to describe the observed practices of selecting and editing themes, concepts and products to support the brand concept in a physical and literary sense. As presented in Themes 5 and 6, the terms “edit” “editorial” and “editing” were used by all luxury retailers in the context of developing a distinct editorial point of view as a means of differentiation or a position that spotlights and distinguishes the luxury brand experience. The role of the editor itself was observed to represent a highly influential one in luxury retailing, for example, as stated below:

R7: “One of the most interesting movements I think that is going on is the role of the editor. Because that in a way is absolutely the most important thing.”

R1 was also in agreement regarding the importance of editing:

“We consider editing and buying to part of our DNA and probably our biggest point of difference as a luxury retailer that’s now global. It’s the edit, so that’s curation.”

However, it was identified that editorial curation manifested itself in different ways for the two types of luxury retailer. For the SBLR, editorial curation was observed to relate to the development and editing of specific themes that influences the design of a collection and supports the brand ideology. Whilst the literature does not examine editorial curation in itself, Dion and Arnould (2011) do state that the role of the artistic director is to create and shape or

edit an ideology of expression. However, it is noted that this finding is limited to one SBLR only and therefore, whilst it presents a new contribution to the literature, there is considerable opportunity for further research regarding editorial curation in sole luxury brand retailing.

For the MBLRs, it was observed to refer to how the buyer edits a collection of multi brands to form a seasonal edit as an important means of differentiation and a way of strategically positioning the retail brand and adding value to the customer. The relevance of a curated edit of multiple brands and products in retailing is noted in the literature as code for a discerning eye and great taste (Williams, 2009). In addition, Twitchell (2003) states that the value of a curation of products in the retail environment does not necessarily reside in the objects themselves, but rather the perception of a special, edited selection of products. However, it is recognized that the existence of a curated edit that supports a brand concept and is perceived to be a means of differentiation in luxury retailing, suffers from a paucity of coverage in the literature. Therefore, this finding suggests a new and additional contribution to the literature.

Drawing on the museology literature, it is possible to observe that editorial curation may be likened to Roppola's (2014) description of the Resonating process, which relates to how the edit and selection of items influences an experience. Roppola (2014) proposes that a curated selection of objects, driven by the Frame (or brand concept), creates a "wow factor" which enhances resonance and influences behaviour of people, their choices and their approach towards building a relationship. The perspective that a curated edit serves to help customers focus on making choices was articulated by C5 when commenting on the role of the curator in luxury retail:

"It's all about choice and it's about display and it seems to me that retail is all about choice. About people making choices and displaying it in a such a way that people can then do the right thing which is buy what you've got on sale."

In addition, as outlined in findings in Theme 9, MBLRs stated that an important driver behind having a curated edit as a means of differentiation, was also related to the huge choice consumers have online. In addition, curation in the luxury retail context was identified in the case of Selfridges as a means of gaining competitive advantage and growth. Whilst the brand literature does not examine the role of editorial curation in luxury retailing vis-a-vis the mass of information now available to customers, the literature relating to digital and social media strategy does acknowledge that due to the prolific amount of information and choice online, "curation in a digital world is not a luxury but a necessity" (Dale, 2014: p. 200). The amount of choice that a customer faces online and the importance of editing and curating information that supports an omnichannel brand experience was recognized in the research:

R7: “The role of the curator editing is the most important thing in brand communications because everyone is online and there is so much information, there is so much product. I mean it’s unnavigable without it.”

R1 was also in agreement and described the importance on developing a curated edit online: “It does always need to feel like that it’s a curated edit, even though we are selling over 400 brands. It’s about maintaining that kind of philosophy about the curated edit first and foremost.”

The requirement to offer customers a luxury brand experience that selects, edits and presents multi luxury brands in a curated way that cuts through the noise by having a distinct point of view, and is one that customers trust and admire like a luxury magazine, was observed to be a key differentiator. Again, whilst there is little in the brand literature that refers to this finding, the digital literature does and stresses the importance of “bringing the web back to human scale with human filters you trust and love” (Rosenbaum, 2011) as quoted in Dale, 2014: p. 200).

Further, despite online shopping being recognized in the literature as the fastest growing area of internet usage (Forsythe and Shi, 2003), it is also acknowledged that research regarding online luxury retailing remains at a rudimentary stage (e.g. Moore and Doyle, 2010; Liu et al, 2013). Therefore, it is suggested that this finding is a new one in the context of understanding the meaning of editorial curation and therefore is a contribution to the literature. However, it is recognised that this is a first step and there remains considerable scope for further research.

Following the development of a curated edit, either in store and online, the next form of curation that was observed refers to physical curation, which is now discussed.

8.3.1.3. Physical Curation – The Stage of the Luxury Brand Experience

As described in Theme 8, physical curation was observed to refer to the design of the presentation, display and installation of the curated brand concept. It was noted that this form of curation relates more to the physical store environment rather than online, as the luxury store is recognised as the key physical, multi-sensory brand touchpoint or stage where the brand experiences come to life. The key objective of physical curation was identified to bring the curated concept to life, and in conjunction with an edited narrative or story, manifest in a luxury brand experience.

Physical curation was referred to as two observed curatorial activities. Firstly, product curation, which relates to the selection and arrangement of products and the display of those products. Secondly, display curation, which was observed to be the "stage" of the brand experience relating to the architecture, layout, interior design of the store within which the brand experience takes place. These two different curatorial activities are now discussed. With regards to product curation, as presented in Chapter 8.2.2.2, the activity of arranging and curating products in luxury retailing was described differently by cultural institution and luxury retail respondents. Cultural institution professionals, specifically those employed by museums with permanent collections, referred to product curation as being no more than visual merchandising as it did not contribute any form of intellectual or theoretical value. However, as outlined in Chapter 8.2.1, the meaning of curation is evolving away from the traditional art-historian association, which focuses on scholarly expertise and knowledge concerning objects, to one that focuses more on experience and consequently, experience design. In addition, as presented in Chapter 8.2.2.2, in light of the evolution of the term, this also reflects the interpretation of value, which is shifting from intellectual value associated with knowledge about artefacts to experiential value.

Luxury retailers, however, stated that product curation was concerned with developing a link between products that creates an experience, generating experiential value. Visual merchandising was acknowledged to be part of the process of product curation and art of display as visually it contributes to a strong retail brand identity, communicates the brand and motivates customers to purchase, yet on its own as an activity does not constitute the curation of an experience. As presented in Themes 3, 4 and 7, references were also made likening product curation with the curation of temporary exhibitions installations and the employment of temporary exhibitions curators for product curation. For example, when describing the curation of a scarf hall that contains hundreds of products that are challenging to display and arrange, R2 stated that the focus goes beyond just visual merchandising and is about developing an experience that is similar to a temporary show or exhibition.

Whilst the importance of arranging products as a tool for retailers to stage and bring to life a brand experience is recognised in the brand literature (e.g. Naylor et al, 2008; Lindstrom, 2005b; Schmitt, 1999; Fulberg, 2003), the role of curation of products as part of the luxury brand experience is not. Silverstein and Fiske (2008) state that luxury products must engage the customer emotionally, help create a self-identity and provide an experience, yet they do not go further and discuss the methods of doing this or refer to the role of curation. Pine and Gilmore (1998) also reference products as props as a way to engage customers and create a memorable experience, and Ailawadi and Keller (2004) state that product assortment influences the customer perception of the image of store, but neither refer to the role of curation.

In addition, the literature also refers to products or merchandise as a way to promote the brand and store image (e.g. Davies and Ward, 2002; Martineau, 1958; Porter and Claycomb, 1997), yet again fails to go beyond individual functional elements such as assortment, brand mix and price and mention the role of linkage, curation and development of an experience. The neglect in the literature is noted by Barry and Ward (2005) who do not refer to curation, but state that even little attention has been paid to visual merchandising and display and the connection to the development of the retail brand. Barry and Ward (2005: p. 507) also argue that despite research existing concerning merchandise and presentation techniques (e.g. Davies and Ward, 2002; Kerfoot et al, 2003) even the researchers "may not have characterized their work as being directly grounded in aspects of visual merchandising and display". More recently, Park et al (2015: p. 88) addressed the identified need for additional research and state that visual merchandising can be defined as "a process that stages merchandise the customer wants in the right place, at the right time" and to communicate the brand, pique consumer interest and motivate purchase intention. However, this definition does not refer to visual merchandising as an integrated part of the overall curation of a brand experience.

The lack of commentary in the brand literature regarding how product curation supports the development of a luxury brand experience suggests that this research offers a new addition to the literature. The contribution is that this form of curatorial activity is focused on developing a link or meaningful thread between multiple products for the purpose of developing an experience and is directed by the curatorial activities described as brand curation and editorial curation. It is, however, noted that the nature of product curation may differ between SBLRs and MBLRs, in light of the number of multiple products and brands that the MBLR needs to curate. It is suggested that this difference represents a gap in the literature and an opportunity for further examination.

Drawing on the museology literature, the finding that product curation in multi brand luxury retail was observed to be similar to temporary exhibition curation, and relates to the development of a link or thread, concurs with Arnold's (2009) and Kaniari's (2014) description of temporary ideas-led exhibition curation. Arnold (2009: p. 20) suggests that temporary exhibition curation differs from permanent collection museum curation as a discipline, due to it being ideas-led, interdisciplinary and led by "visual thinkers" or "magicians" who build an invisible thread of a highly diverse range of items, concurs with the findings in Theme 7. Further, the reference to the development of the link or invisible thread that underpins product curation as being "magical" in Theme 8 (see quote on page 28 above) also concurs with Kaniari's (2014: p. 447) reference to the exhibition curator as a magician and the development of a visual architecture (described as the curation of physical items) as a "magician's act". Kaniari (2014: p. 477) argues that this form of curation is magical, as firstly, it "comprises of an act of 'conjuring' both literally and metaphorically, as it ascribes not only

visibility, but also new meanings to material goods". Secondly, it "uses comparisons and contrasts aiming at, very much the same way with a magician's act, to the production of uncanny juxtapositions, which while doubtful as to their logical conclusions may be witnessed empirically and hence be perceived, at a communicably consensual matter, as facts." However, whilst the act of pulling together multiple different types of items or products and building an inspiring and "magical" thread and visual architecture that is both meaningful and compelling is shared in both luxury retail and temporary exhibitions, it is suggested that this is not wholly dependent on the creativity or "intellectual temper of the curator" entirely, as described by Kaniari (2014), but rather the curated brand concept underpins the direction of product curation in luxury retail, as outlined in Chapter 8.3.1.1.

Roppola (2014) recognises that the way in which objects or products are curated and displayed is critical but that it is directed by the overall Frame (or brand concept) that the organisation wishes to present and the type of experience it wishes to deliver e.g. as "M(Art) World" as described by Joy et al (2014). Roppola's (2014) four Frames e.g. Sanctuary of Valuable Objects, Learning, Enjoyment and Pilgrimage all relate to the luxury retail brand experience Joy et al (2014) describe in their reference to a "M(Art)World". Therefore, the reference to the Frame, or brand concept, and how it is manifested in another form of curation, physical curation, supports the findings that the two forms of curation are linked and part of developing an experience.

Further, Roppola, (2014) also states that the effectiveness of curating physical material, e.g. products in luxury retailing, depends on the "poetics" of the aesthetic strategy in the arrangement of products, and also the "politics" of product arrangement e.g. how things are selected, edited and presented to "channel" or influence and persuade people about a socially-constructed reality. It is suggested that in this research, the "poetics" relate to product curation and "politics" refer to both brand curation (the brand concept as the socially-constructed reality) and editorial curation (selection and editing of the products to reinforce and persuade people concerning the brand concept). Drawing on Maguire and Matthews (2012) reference to cultural intermediaries, it can be observed that the roles responsible for product curation are acting as cultural intermediaries who construct value by curating products to frame them "poetically" and "politically". By way of their acknowledged credibility, professional expertise or unique personal taste level, they define and legitimise what is desirable and worthy, and, ultimately, influence both upstream stakeholders such as social media, editors, luxury commentators and, also downstream stakeholders, such as customers, wholesalers and distributors. An example of this, therefore, in light of the findings is that by pursuing an art-focused differentiation strategy, the SBLRs, and, in particular, the artistic director as the key cultural intermediary, draws on the poetics and politics of a permanent exhibition to define what is luxury and desirable and utilises product curation to create a climate of reverence within its flagship. It is, therefore, proposed that the findings constitute a

new contribution to the brand literature but also add to and concur with Roppola's (2014) Relational Model.

Connected to product curation is display curation, the second form of physical curation that influences the luxury brand experience, which is now discussed.

As outlined in Theme 3, display curation was observed to be the most tangible form of curation as it is physical in nature, demonstrates the curatorial ability of the retailer from a multi-sensory perspective and also represents the arena for interaction and co-creation of experiences with customers. Display curation was described as the nature in which the luxury retailer curates elements of display that are both "hard" e.g. architecture, fixtures, furniture, lighting, and "soft" elements e.g. ambience, colour, smell and sound. Display curation was commented to be important for two reasons. Firstly, to create a physical environment that embodies the brand concept and communicate the language of the brand to enable the customer to experience the firsthand the luxury brand experience. Secondly, as a mechanism for brand risk management, to ensure that delivery of the brand experience is consistent and congruent with the brand concept and brand identity.

Findings in Theme 3 and 8 that there is a linkage between the design of an environment and display to the delivery of a brand experience concurs with and adds to the literature, as outlined in the product curation section above (e.g. Martineau, 1958; Kotler, 1974; Moore and Lochhead, 1998; Baker et al, 2002; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974; Bitner, 1991; Sherry, 1998; Lin, 2004; Joy et al, 2014; Pine and Gilmore, 1998); advocates of Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) who argue the power of spatial settings (e.g. Olins, 2000; Kent, 2003; Schroeder, 2005), and, also, the effects of innovative retail architecture on brand experience (e.g. van Marrewijk and Broos, 2012; Kozinets et al, 2002; Penaloza, 1998).

However, despite this extensive coverage regarding the power and influence of design and display in stores, there is limited reference to the role of curation or curatorial activities. In their presentation of the "M(Art)World", Joy et al (2014: p. 356) do present the notion of three processes, curation being one of them and proposed as involving "acquisition, care, research, exhibition, design, layout and the imagining and construction of discourses" and state that curation also focuses on the display area's architecture and interior design. In addition, Joy et al (2014: p. 356) propose that whilst the products are important and carry specific meaning, it is "the aesthetic coding of their materiality" that captivates customers. However, whilst the findings, as outlined in Themes 3, 4 and 7 concur with Joy et al (2014) on the importance of the linking of products to create an overall experience and that curation also focuses on and directs the display architecture and interior design, the findings do not concur that display curation is part of a deliberate strategy for all luxury retailers to develop into a hybrid retailer-cultural institution "M(Art)World".

Whilst the findings outline in Theme 9 that the SBLR, Louis Vuitton, has a strong affiliation with art and artists in the design of its (flagship) stores and regular display collaborations, e.g. the Chapman Brothers, this does differ from MBLRs, suggesting that display curation differs depending on the type of luxury retailer and the brand concept (or using Roppola's term "Frame") adopted.

In addition, the tendency of the SBLR to invest in high profile window displays around the world, for example, Faye McLeod's scenographic display curation at Louis Vuitton and the gravitation towards art regarding the design of the store and display concurs with, and supports the literature, that SBLRs are pursuing an artification strategy as a means of enshrining and elevating the status of the luxury branded products and as a continual method of keeping the brand fresh and differentiated (Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015).[33] Findings in Themes 3 and 4 highlight that the SBLR, particularly in the flagship store, emulates the architecture, space, lighting and art of display found in museums.

R1 concurred with the drawing inspiration from museums: "One of the clever things of stores like Hermes, Louis Vuitton and stores like that is the experience in the store is close to a museum. You will go into those stores because they way in which they are designed but also curated. The space and working with such interesting architects make the space feel fantastic."

EC1 also agreed with how artists and architects are being employed as curators for the design and display of sole luxury brand retailers, using the example of Prada's employment of the architect Rem Koolhaas: "Rem Koolhaas is more of a curator in terms of display for Prada."

Therefore, the finding that SBLRs are employing the same architects as museums, are investing in art themselves, both as a patron and to be displayed within the stores themselves (e.g. Theme 2 – Louis Vuitton and the Fondation) and, also continually embarking on product design and display collaborations with artists in order to borrow the aura and codes or language of design of museums, as a means of differentiation, concurs with and adds to the literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Kapferer and Bastien, 2009; Hagtvegt and Patrick, 2008; Bingham, 2005; Berghaus et al, 2014; Riewoldt, 2002; Barreneche, 2005, Nobbs et al, 2012).

[33] Faye McLeod, the ex Creative Director of Windows and Visual Merchandising at Liberty, is now the Visual Image Director for Louis Vuitton globally, employed at Louis Vuitton since 2009. To date, her curated displays have involved collaborations with high profile architects, artists, set designers and engineers, most recently showcased in a publication by Assouline: "Louis Vuitton Windows"

However, the findings do not concur with the literature that display curation and the artification strategy are the same for MBLRs, suggesting that there is a new contribution to the literature regarding how the emphasis and focus of display curation, even as a professional discipline, differs between the two types of luxury retailer.

Two differences were identified in the findings. Firstly, as outlined in Theme 8, the continual focus to develop curated brand concepts is driven more by the pace of seasonal fashion and plays a bigger role in setting the direction of display curation than a strategy of artification as a means to continually differentiate. In addition, as presented in Theme 3, the use of artists or art in displays in MBLRs was rather to add meaning to a curated brand concept or story, create an innovative point of view to the collection of multi brands or make the experience theatrical and exciting, rather than attempt to elevate the value of one brand. However, whilst the literature acknowledges that retailers draw on theatre to create immersive, entertaining and hedonistic experiences (e.g. Penaloza, 1998; Kozinets et al, 2002; Schechner,1988) and also atmospherics (e.g. Kotler, 1974; Schmitt, 1999; Mehrabian and Russell, 1974), there is very little in the literature that connects this strategy to display curation, which is underpinned by a curated brand concept. This suggests that this presents a new contribution to the literature and again, one that would benefit from further research.

The second difference refers to how the MBLRs described the art of display and display curation as a way to make meaning, communicate and mediate understanding between the story and the connected multiple products. As presented in Themes 5 and 7, display curation was likened more to exhibition design in temporary exhibitions, rather than museums, where there is a mutually recognised shared focus on editing and linking things using display to curate an overall experience rather than on objects per se:

“Things like editing and curating and delivering an experience share a lot of the same things in retail or exhibition world…I think a lot of curatorial roles in retail are the equivalent of the exhibition designer and curator.” (C2)

Whilst curatorial focus on making meaning using display in the luxury retail environment has received very little attention in the brand literature, the finding in this research does concur with institutional theory (Mitnick and Ryan, 2015). As outlined in Chapter 2.3.2, Mitnick and Ryan (2015) recognize that curatorial making meaning has received scant attention, but propose that curators create a visual link through display that shows people how to access the information, perceive new meanings and interpret the experiences. In addition, this finding also supports the museology literature suggesting that display is used to channel and influence people through Frames (Roppola, 2014) or “spatial envelopes” (Stenglin, 2004) using a variety of different displays to create specific experiences (Kaplan and Kaplan, 1989). Therefore, it is suggested that whilst the findings concur with institutional theory and

museology literature, it represents a new contribution to the brand literature and one that is worthy of further attention. It would be interesting, for example, to compare a broader group of sole and MBLRs and observe the level of influence of the differentiation strategies being pursued have on the disciplines of display curation and meaning-making of experiences. A comparative evaluation of the different cultural intermediary, display curatorial roles within each type of luxury retailer and the nature of their influence would help to shed light on how the framing, influencing and constructing of value differs between the two different types of luxury brand retailers. In addition, drawing on the museology literature, Melchior and Svensson (2014) provide an example of how display curation has evolved in fashion museums e.g. the curation of folk dresses is based on ethnological principles versus the curation of 20th century couture dresses which is more expressive of art history. Further research into the two different types of luxury retailers may lead to deeper insight how display curation as a discipline across luxury retail is evolving and shaping experiences.

Finally, the linkage to the importance of a narrative or story with which to connect and bring the curated display alive was identified as critical to the overall luxury brand experience for both types of luxury retailers. This form of curation was observed to be relational in nature as it referred to interactions between the luxury retailer and customers, resulting in co-created experiences. This form of curation is now examined.

8.3.1.4. Relational Curation – The Dynamic of the Luxury Brand Experience

Relational curation was observed to constitute two curatorial practices. The first refers to storytelling, which was observed to be concerned with the communication of the curated brand concept through a story or narrative that supports physical and editorial curation, and the second, relates to the co-creation of experiences.

The first curatorial practice of relational curation, storytelling, as outlined in the findings in Theme 8, is related to both the curation of content e.g. a highly inspiring tale that supports the immersive, physical curated experience, and, due to the interactive and dynamic nature of telling and receiving and reacting to a story, the curation of a relationship between the customer and the luxury retailer. The importance of storytelling as a curatorial activity was referenced by all respondents who commented that the fundamental principle of curation in luxury retailing (and temporary exhibitions) is storytelling:

As described by C5, a temporary exhibition curator who as worked extensively in both luxury retail and cultural environments:

“You can’t be a curator if you don’t tell the story of your subject” (C5)

Which was also echoed by the luxury retailers:

“A good curator will tell a very powerful, concise story” (R2)

“Stories are important so that they (the customers) feel like they’ve had the Selfridges experience” (R4)

The finding that storytelling plays a critical role in the design and development of a luxury brand experience is one that has received limited attention in the literature. As outlined in Chapter 2.2.5.1, Lundqvist et al (2013) acknowledge how little empirical research exists regarding firm-originated stories as opposed to stories that focus on customer product usage experiences (Chang, 2009); story content in advertising (Stern, 1994), blog content (e.g. Woodside et al, 2008; Hsu et al, 2009) or are founded on celebrity or ‘mythotype’ endorsement (Olson, 1999). However, whilst Lundqvist et al (2013: p. 283) state that storytelling supports the creation of experiences as “stories fascinate people and are often more easily remembered than facts”, the authors do not link storytelling to curatorial activities or as the means to deliver a curated brand concept. Escalas (2004a) also states that customers are influenced by “narrative transportation” of stories, but again, there is little mention of storytelling as a means of supporting a curated brand concept that enhances customers emotional states or influences behaviour through the delivery of an immersive experience. Instead, the literature focuses on storytelling rather as a framework or context to communicate brand values (e.g. Fog et al, 2005; Kozinets et al, 2010), add favourable associations to a brand (Leone et al, 2006) and promote services in store (Mossberg and Nissen Johansen, 2006).

Joy et al (2014) do, however, acknowledge the power of narratives to support the luxury brand experience for the SBLR, Louis Vuitton, but do not examine storytelling in depth nor do they examine MBLRs. Joy et al (2014: p. 354) refer to the “production of a precisely engineered retail narrative” which revolves around the artisanal features of the brand for two reasons, firstly to remind customers of the heritage of Louis Vuitton and secondly, to remind the sales staff to communicate and deliver the required brand experience. The use of stories as scripts for sales associates is also recognised by Dion and Arnould (2011) who claim that they enable sales associates to communicate the brand identity, the story of the brand’s artisanal heritage, or, most importantly, the artistic director’s ideology. As presented in Theme 9, the finding that the SBLR sales associates are trained to curate displays that make them coherent when looked at as a story, and deliver the brand experience, concurs with the literature (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011). It also highlights that by emulating an museum-type environment with a more contemplative experience, as

described by Lord (2014), the role is a more passive one for the customer and which works with an engineered retail narrative, described by Joy et al (2014).

However, the finding differs from Joy et al's (2014) research in two ways. Firstly, that not all luxury retailers are, or aiming to become, art institutions in their own right and using storytelling to achieve that position. Secondly, that "prestation", the process of creating brand narratives, designed to increase customer loyalty, is being pursued by all luxury retailers. As outlined in the findings in Theme 5, the curation of stories by MBLRs is more concerned with making the luxury brand experience compelling by supporting physical curation, but is also highly edited in order to be shoppable and channel the customer behaviour:

"When you've got millions and millions of products, it's got to be shoppable, churn out a certain amount of cash for the business, easy to understand and create a brand experience that has impact" (R2)

In addition, the findings also highlighted that the sales associates may not always be the key storytellers as others possess greater credibility or means to mediate experiences, which highlights a difference from the tightly controlled, internally-focused narrative of a SBLR:

"We engage who we think become almost brand ambassadors for us who are editors and press and we get them to tell the story because that's about it feeling really credible, I think, whereas sometimes I think when you shout about it yourself and you say it too much, it's not…it (needs) to feel really credible" (R1)

This finding concurs with Roppola's (2014) reference to storytelling, as described as the process of Broadening. Broadening is described as enabling people to interpret, make and negotiate meaning through the mediation of stories. As outlined by Themes 5 and 8, MBLRs use stories to mediate the luxury brand experience and depending on the level of credibility, they may be told by employees or people outside of the organisation. This suggests that the purpose of storytelling in the design of a luxury brand experience is not just as a script to reinforce the artistic director's ideology (Dion and Arnould, 2011) or to specifically influence to enhance customer loyalty to the brand (Joy et al, 2014).

It is suggested that the findings in this research make a new contribution to the literature as they focus on two types of luxury retailers and not only on SBLRs, which has been the focus in the literature to date. This research therefore provides a broader perspective on how storytelling is being used to create brand experiences in the luxury retail environment. For the MBLRs, the curation of content in the form of stories and storytelling was identified to be a way of bringing the brand concept alive and the fundamental link between the physical curation, e.g. the multiple products and the design of the environment in which they are sold.

In addition, that the storyteller is not restricted to being a sales employee but may be someone else can effectively mediate meaning for the customer, for example collaborators, or as outlined in Chapter 2.2.5.1, even 'mythotypes' as described by Olson (1999). The findings in Themes 4 and 7, regarding collaborations with respected artists in the public eye and employment of the exhibition curators to design and facilitate the narrative transportation and development of an authentic, immersive experience that goes beyond "pure consumption" also highlight this strategy.

It is suggested, however, this area would benefit from further research, for example, how the stories translate into omnichannel strategies for both types of luxury retailers, or how brand concepts and ideologies change and direct the stories over time, how they are influenced by the input from exhibition curators, or the nature of the training of sales associates as the key delivery mechanism in SBLRs. Another area of interest for future research would also be to examine the extent of interaction in the process of storytelling in luxury retail in light of the transparency and immediacy of social media. Finally, the finding that multiple people play a part in the process of curating stories that support the brand experience was also observed and is not extensively examined in the literature. This is now discussed.

The second form of relational curation was observed to be the co-creation of experiences with customers. The research identified that co-creation of experiences varied, for example: the Creative Shelf collaboration with the Chapman Brothers at Louis Vuitton and the customer choice of saving the disposable camera as an artefact or developing it to print out as works of art; interactive installations at Matchesfashion.com and Liberty, immersive events and theatre in Selfridges, and customers participating as "honorary shopkeepers" at House of Voltaire.

As outlined in Theme 8, the finding was that storytelling, as a two-way interaction between the luxury retailer and the customer, was a means to engage with, build relationships and create the co-experiences with customers. Whilst the literature does acknowledge the importance and positive effects of actively building relationships or partnerships with customers through emotional connections, engagement and constructed realities, leading to brand loyalty (e.g. Verhoef et al, 2009; Tynan et al, 2010; Holt, 2004; Fulberg, 2003; Louis and Lombart, 2010; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014; Ramaswamy, 2011), this is not linked to curatorial activities nor storytelling of a curated brand concept, editorial curation or physical curation. The desire of customers to co-create experiences e.g. play a role or act out an aspirational self-identify has been examined in the literature (Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011), yet it has not been done so in the context of co-creating experiences in the luxury retail environment. Further, the findings differ from the literature, which tends to focus only on how co-created experiences are created by management and are based primarily on the services offered in store by SBLRs (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Morrison and Crane, 2007; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Atwal and Williams, 2009).

A finding in Theme 8 highlights that MBLRs acknowledge the importance of enabling customers to enjoy the brand experience in an individual, personalised manner, e.g.:

“You’ve got to allow a sense of the individual, how they want to experience it and how they want to choose and create their touch points and what they want to take away from it” (R1)

The emphasis on in the individual customer creating his or her own experience was echoed by R4:

“It’s pretty much how they (the customers) engage with us, how they engage with the brand. It doesn’t have to be how they want to do it.”

However, it was observed that whilst experiences were recognised as critical in a sole brand luxury retail environment, the parameters of freedom to genuinely co-create experiences were more controlled in Louis Vuitton than the MBLRs. When discussing how sales associates are trained to deliver experiences, R3 discussed that there was a lot of process behind the delivery and was highly structured:

“Everything about the brand experience is very controlled.”

This finding concurs with the literature that experiences within the sole brand luxury retail are limited, firstly, with reference to Joy et al’s (2014: p. 356) acknowledgement that there is only an element of co-creation and it relates to the observation of physical features of the store: “customers are engaged with the art on display and a store’s architectural features”. Secondly, that sole brand luxury retail experiences are tightly managed, often by the artistic director and always within the context of the brand ideology (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011). Further, this supports the observation in Chapter 2.3.3.1 regarding the similarities between Joy et al’s (2014) traditional art-historian interpretation of curation; which relates to permanent collections and focuses on the appreciation of the quality of the object, rather than co-creation of experiences, and Lord’s (2014) mode of experience in permanent collection exhibitions; which describes the experience as being contemplative, relatively passive and focusing on the enhanced appreciation of the meaning and quality of the object itself, with little or no participation or co-creation of experience.

In addition, in light of the finding that the SBLR has formed close associations with the art world as a means of differentiation and new path to growth (Kapferer, 2015); with many products positioned as valuable works of art behind glass on pedestals (Joy et al, 2014), employment of the museum architects for the development of monumental flagships (Nobbs et al, 2012) and the experience being likened to a cultural institution full of precious objects, it was observed that the formality of the curated display and spatial environment may even

discourage individual co-creation of experiences, and possibly result in intimidation and alienation:

"Do you think they're alienating people though? It is interesting to think about whether people feel like that they can't go into those spaces because they can't afford those objects but they still want an experience. I wonder whether LV is losing this crowd. It's interesting to think about what story they're telling and how they are trying to engage in light of the need for provenance building, recognition of power of history and setting themselves in this very particular artisan or craft-led market because it gives authenticity and it gives status as that's what they need to back up (their story) and have validity." (C3)

This suggests that there is a fundamental difference between sole and MBLRs regarding the approach taken to the co-creation of brand experiences. It is observed that MBLRs acknowledge the importance of the individual creating or her own experience and actively seek customers to engage with the curated concepts (that unify the multiple products) to co-create experiences with them, as it is part of the designed immersive experience. Drawing on Atwal and Williams (2009) adaptation of Pine and Gilmore's (1998) four retail experiential zones, it suggests that MBLRs are designing escapist, educational and performativity experiences that facilitate higher levels of experience intensity and involvement with customers in order to generate value through interaction and dialogue (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). In addition, this emphasis on co-creation may be observed to share similarities with temporary ideas-led exhibitions, which also aim to design and develop highly immersive and co-created experiences (e.g. Lord, 2014; Roppola, 2014; Molineux, 2014).

This differs from a SBLR who is concerned with a single brand story, which supports a tightly controlled brand identity and ideology and offers more of a contemplative, passive experience. As outlined in Theme 4, collaborations and events with renowned artists in Louis Vuitton were observed to be a key method of inviting customers to gain insights "behind the scenes" or exclusive "Third Spaces" (Nobbs et al, 2012). It was discussed that these brand experiences were designed to make the customer feel special and privileged to have access to observe artistic and creative talents associated with the brand, but were not, however, opportunities for customers to interact freely with, or influence the brand and, therefore, actively co-create individual brand experiences themselves.[34]

[34] A recent example of a presentation and a "behind the scenes" experience may also be observed with Louis Vuitton "Series 3 Exhibition" in London, where customers are invited to attend an exhibition in London that has been curated to tell the story of the creative process. The experiential installation will take visitors through a 13-room journey over three floors and explore every step in the creative process that went towards creating this season's collection. http://uk.louisvuitton.com/eng-gb/articles/series-3-exhibition-in-london Accessed: 21.9.15

Nonetheless, whilst the curated brand concept remains a management-driven activity and directs editorial and physical curatorial activities, it appears therefore that regarding relational curation, the MBLR is more open to the genuine co-creation of experiences with customers than the SBLR. The SBLR focuses more on delivering a tightly controlled narrative (e.g. Joy et al, 2014, Kapferer, 2015), managed experiences and offers limited freedom to veer away from a management-centric scripted brand story (e.g. Roper et al, 2011; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015) that communicates its authority and ideology and evokes meanings of privilege and exclusivity through imposing museum-mimicked architecture, and the elevation of its luxury products to the status of art.

Referring back to Chapter 2.2.2, this suggests that the differences in approach towards relational curation may originate from how the different types of luxury brand retailers perceive and define themselves as a luxury brand. The adoption of a tightly managed experience by the SBLR, where all brand communications reinforce messages that the luxury brand is elevated to the status of art and is prestigious, exclusive and rare, suggests that the paradigm is one that relates to Cervellon and Coudriet's (2013) perspective. Cervellon and Coudriet's (2013) claim that the definition of a luxury brand is a management one as it refers to possession of expertise, prestige and auratic power. Drawing on this perspective, it is possible to interpret the finding that in light of the desire to retain this power, the sole luxury brand does not fully embrace individual co-creation of experiences. Rather, it attempts to maintain a tight control over all elements of the luxury brand and, consequently, also the constructed reality and the brand experience of the customer, as described by Louis and Lombart (2010).

In contrast, by adopting a more open and engaging invitation to co-create individual brand experiences, it is suggested that the MBLRs paradigm of enabling experiences and mediating individual meaning is more aligned with Tynan et al's (2010) and Roper et al's (2011) integrated perspective, that the definition of a luxury brand is inherently polysemic as it is a socially constructed concept, generated by the customers' co-creation of luxury brand experiences. Whilst brand experiences are also closely managed to support the delivery of the curated brand concept by MBLRs, it is observed that the brand concepts are seasonal in nature and change over time, as do the experiences, and therefore are not as rigidly adhered to or protected as a SBLR's brand ideology or source of power.

The brand literature does not examine the differences of how curatorial activities that drive the brand experience are managed, and the finding that the two types of luxury retailers have different approaches to the co-creation of experiences may be observed to make a new contribution to the brand literature and one that would benefit from further enquiry and research. For example, further research on how the different types of luxury brand retailers view and implement brand risk management strategies in the context of co-creation of

experiences, or the dynamic between the nature of customer engagement, the training and managerial control of sales associates to deliver the brand concepts that reinforce the brand values and direct the curation of experiences, could both offer new insights on the approaches taken by the different luxury retailers.

A second key finding in Themes 4 and 7 refers to the MBLR employment of exhibition curators to support the design and development of co-created experiences. It was observed that exhibition curators were employed due to their ability to curate a brand concept, design a immersive physical experience and support the co-creation of experiences by focusing on the mediation of customer meaning and interpretation (with different levels of prior knowledge), as they would do in an exhibition. C5 highlighted that the key principles of curating an experience are concerned with facilitating new understanding, enabling engagement and starting a conversation with customers:

"How you tell a story about the subject that you're focusing on is the guiding principle. To try and get audiences to engage with things in a way that multi-layered and more in depth. To have a conversation about how these things have changed, the way we interact with one another, the materials we surround ourselves with and what they say about us."

Therefore, by employing exhibition curators to curate an environment that mediates co-creation of experiences, it suggests that this is another example of the multi brand luxury retail environment offering the customer more freedom to co-create experiences as they wish. The mediation of co-creation of experiences also offers customers a greater opportunity to tailor experiences around their emotional needs which, as the literature states, vary throughout the brand experience journey and are critical to meet (e.g. Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012; Woodruffe-Burton and Wakenshaw, 2011; Brakus et al, 2009; Nysveen and Pedersen, 2014).

The brand literature does not examine the role of curation collaboration and mediation of a brand experience. However, drawing on the museology literature, this finding supports the perspective that curators are transforming not only cultural intermediaries but into mediators of experiences (e.g. O'Neill, 2012; Edmonds et al, 2009; Freitas, 2011; Simon, 2010; Roppola, 2014; Lord, 2014). In addition, it suggests that the employment of exhibition curators, who are able to design and deliver experiences across both cultural and retail environments, indicates the existence of a blurring between the two worlds. The cross-over or blurring of curated experiences concurs with Dernie (2006) who states that exhibition experiences are now a blur of three spheres: narrative spaces, which focus on storytelling; performative spaces which focus on people interacting, and simulated experiences which focus on mediating and supporting people to co-create experiences. All three elements of

exhibition experience design relate to the observed different forms of curation in this research as highlighted in this section.

The finding that exhibition curators help luxury retailers mediate co-created experiences with customers, which builds positive relationships, also supports Roppola's (2014) claim that firstly, the mediation of a person's own experiences is essential in order for them to find meaning that works for them. Secondly, to form the basis of a genuine relationship, in this case between the customer and the MBLR. The example of the honorary shopkeeper role by the House of Voltaire relates to Roppola's (2014) Broadening construct which is concerned with experiences that offer opportunities to broaden self-awareness and create learning and understanding through performativity. The invitation for customers to wear brown shopkeepers aprons and become honorary shopkeepers was observed to be a very effective way of engaging and co-creating experiences with customers:

"People really enjoy playing shopkeepers. Then they invite all of their friends. It's really successful. It enables us to extend our networks. It just keeps the energy going of the shop…and keep the momentum going beyond the buzz of the exhibition." (RC2)

Drawing on Roppola's (2014) Relational model, it is possible to observe that performativity in this scenario relates to the luxury retail space in the House of Voltaire being constructed as a co-created performance in which the customers are the performers in the act of creative consumption, and therefore co-create their own experiences. Further, it suggests that the customers themselves act as the cultural intermediaries to peers, therefore endorsing and legitimising the products and generating a different form of curatorial value. This represents a further new finding and contribution to the literature and again, one that warrants further investigation. For example, what are the limits of co-created experiences before they become too engineered, themed or gimmicky and no longer relate to the codes of luxury brand retailing expected by customers? What can luxury retailers learn from other industries, such as the theatrical or entertainment industry regarding meaningful co-created experiences and ones that enable the customers to also provide meaning concerning the luxury brand itself? What are the various forms of curatorial value that different types of cultural intermediaries can generate?

Finally, as presented in Theme 9, it was observed that numerous curatorial roles that contribute to relational curation and bring to life the curated luxury brand experience exist in all types of luxury retailers. The roles have received scant attention in the literature, with Joy et al (2014) and Kapferer (2015) focusing on SBLRs only. Following the discussion on how curation manifests itself in four different forms, it is these findings that the discussion now turns to in the third and final discussion section.

8.3.2. Conclusion

This discussion chapter has focused on addressing research objective 2 regarding how curation is manifested in the luxury retail environment. The empirical research has identified that within sole and MBLRs, seven key curatorial activities exist, which are classified as four forms of curation: brand, editorial, physical and relational. The nature and characteristics of the four forms of curation were discussed in view of the existing literature.

The contribution to the literature is that firstly, this is one of the first studies where the concept of curation is explicitly explored in the context of the luxury retail environment, with the findings casting new light on how curation is understood and deployed in the design and development of luxury brand experience in two types of luxury retailers. To date, brand literature has focused on luxury brand strategies (e.g. artification) and experiences in SBLRs only, with limited reference to the influence and role of curation on the design and development of a luxury brand experience (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

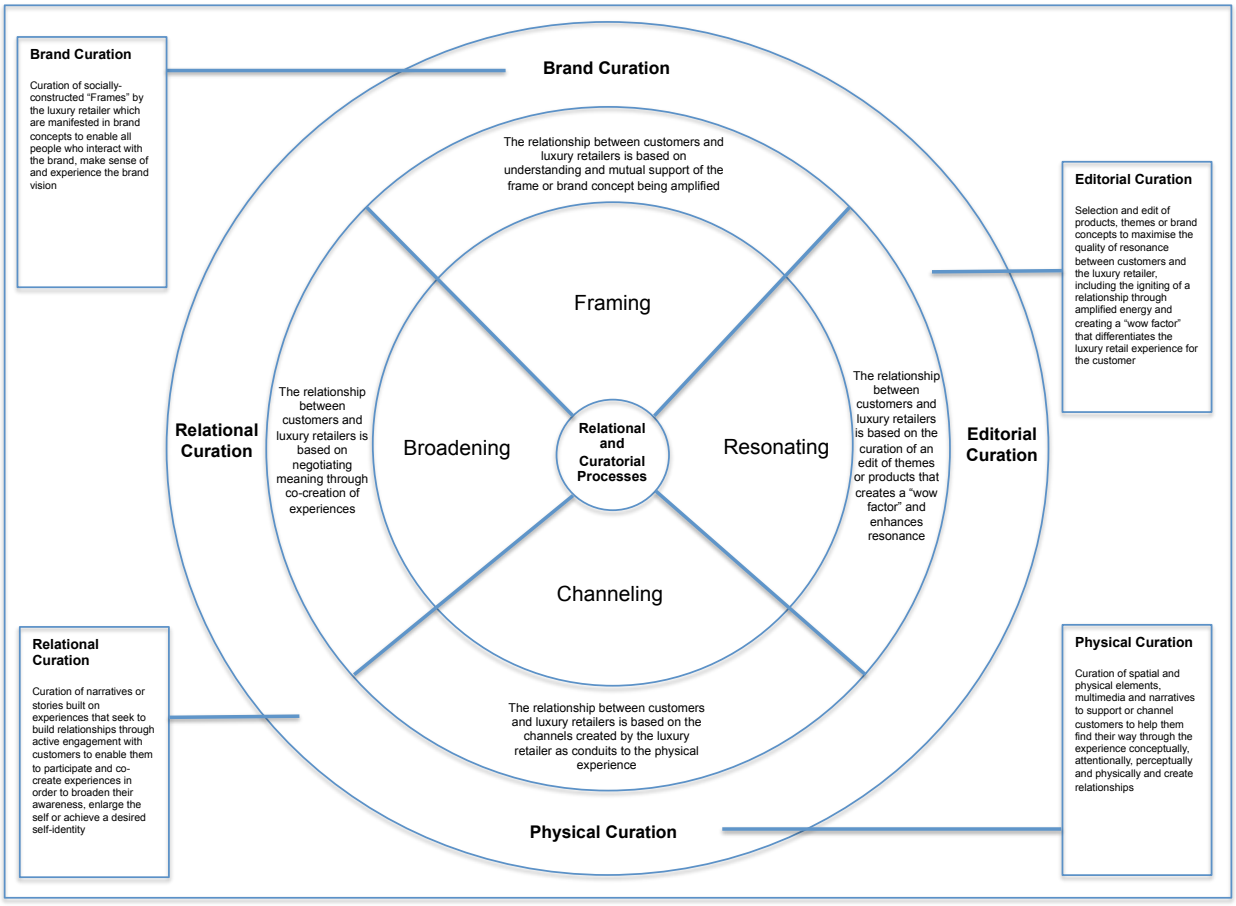
With reference to the literature review in Chapter 2, the findings concur with the literature that both types of luxury retailer do share the same objective of delivering a seamless, multi-sensory brand experience that delights their customers, develops relationships and ultimately, enhances the value of the luxury brand (e.g. Morrison and Crane, 2007; Kim, 2012, Hamiede, 2011; Berthon et al, 2009). However, the findings add to the literature in that they do highlight that the types of methods and approaches the different retailers adopt vary.

Secondly, the output of the findings has generated the first working framework, Four Forms of Curation, that attempts to capture the different curatorial activities across the luxury retail organisations. It was also recognized that the forms of curation are sequential, but vary in emphasis and focus depending on the type of luxury retailer and the differentiation strategy being pursued. For example, it was observed that MBLRs focus more on the development of curated brand concepts as links or threads that unify multiple brands and stories and act as blueprints for the desired luxury brand experience each season. Whereas for a SBLR, a curated brand concept focuses on brand curation in the context of enriching or refreshing the sole brand and its ideology, usually by its association with art and culture, and through the medium of collaborations with artists. However, it is recognized that this is only a first step and it represents an opportunity for further examination and review e.g. a broader comparative study of MBLRs or a deeper review of SBLRs only, or even customer interpretations of how relational curation impacts brand experiences.

A third contribution refers to the linking of the Four Forms of Curation Framework to an existing theoretical framework in the museology literature, Roppola's (2014) Relational Model,

which examines the nature of exhibition design. The distinction is made in both the findings, as outlined in Theme 7, and by Roppola (2014) that exhibition experience design is similar to retail experience design and that both differ from traditional permanent collection experience design. It was observed that all four forms of curation relate to the four processes of exhibition design, for example, “Framing” and Brand Curation, “Resonating” and Editorial Curation, “Channeling” and Physical Curation and lastly, “Broadening” and Relational Curation, as highlighted in Figure 8.1:

Figure 8.1: Adaptation and Contribution to Roppola’s (2014) Relational Model with the Four Forms of Curation



The adapted model reflects a customer-centric, socially-constructed perspective of luxury brand experience, as opposed to a management-centric one as outlined in Chapter 2.2.2, therefore supporting customer-centric brand experience design. Both models provide new opportunities for further enquiry. Are there other similarities in experience design that transcend the two environments? The findings in Theme 3 and the literature identified (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014) that there is an increasing blurring between the two worlds, with both environments drawing upon each other for ideas and inspiration – how can the adapted model reflect the nature of this blurring? Does the blurring and similarities imply that

a new discipline of curation will surface that can serve both environments? What will the curatorial roles look like in all of these processes? Curatorial roles are the focus of the next section of the discussion. Section 3 of the discussion examines the nature of curatorial roles that were observed to be responsible for bringing the various forms of curation to life. To conclude, Table 8.4 summarises how this research has addressed research objective 2 of identifying the ways in which curation manifests itself in luxury retail. In addition, referring back to Gap 6 in Chapter 2.4. and Table 2.8, it also highlights suggested contributions to the literature and opportunities for further research.

Table 8.4: Manifestation of Curation in Luxury Retail: Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research

Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research – Manifestation of Curation in Luxury Retail	
How Brand Curation Contributes and Adds Value to the Design and Development of Brand Experience	
Finding	**Contribution/Opportunity for Further Research**
The curation of brand concepts is the first step in designing and developing a luxury brand experience	Supports the museology literature (Roppola, 2014) "Framing" experience design process
Brand concepts support the luxury retailer brand and brand values and act as the blueprint for the delivery of a holistic brand experience *For sole brand luxury retailers:* to continually renew and refresh the sole brand *For multi brand luxury retailers:* to continually generate new concepts, ideas and themes upon which to scaffold or frame the brand experience for each season	Supports the museology literature (Roppola, 2014) New contribution to the brand literature and area for future research
Brand concepts are strengthened through collaboration: *For sole brand luxury retailers*: to refresh and renew a heritage brand through art collaboration *For multi brand luxury retailers:* to enrich or add a new dimension or perspective to the brand experience concept through multiple types of collaboration including temporary exhibition curators	The identified difference between the luxury retailers regarding the nature of collaboration makes a new contribution and is a suggested area for future research
How Editorial Curation Contributes and Adds Value to the Design and Development of Brand Experience	
Finding	**Contribution/Opportunity for Further Research**
Editorial curation refers to the unique point of view held by the luxury retailer that guides the edit or selection of products or themes that support and bring the curated brand concept to life *For sole brand luxury retailers:* the unique point of view of the artistic director influences the edit and selection of the designed product collection and themes in-store and is guided by the artistic ideology *For multi brand luxury retailers:* the unique point of view of the editor or buyer serves as a means of differentiation regarding the edit or buy of multi luxury brands. The differentiated "edit" distinguishes and adds value to the luxury retail experience for the customer	Regarding sole brand luxury retailers, this supports Dion and Arnould (2011) ideology of expression and the nature in which the artistic director selects and edits work to bring the ideological concept to life Regarding multi brand luxury retailers, the selection and edit of products to bring the curated brand concept to life and as a means of differentiation in luxury retail makes a new contribution to the brand literature. Supports museology literature (Roppola, 2014) "Resonating" experience design process New contribution to the literature and opportunity for further research to explore in depth editorial curation process
How Physical Curation Contributes and Adds Value to the Design and Development of Brand Experience	
Finding	**Contribution/Opportunity for Further Research**
Directed by brand curation and editorial curation, product curation creates a meaningful thread between products to support the curated brand concept	New contribution and area for future research Supports the museology literature "Channeling" experience design process (Roppola, 2014) and "invisible thread" and "visual architecture" (e.g. Kaniari, 2014; Arnold, 2009)
Display curation is influenced by the brand concept (or "Frames"): *For sole brand luxury retailers:* follows the permanent art collection exhibition brand concept or frame which emulates characteristics of a cultural institution in flagship stores *For multi brand luxury retailers:* follows the temporary ideas-led exhibition brand concept or frame which emulates a content-rich, multi-sensory, story-led co-created experience. Display curation is to help make meaning and mediate understanding of the brand concept.	Supports the brand literature regarding the type of brand concept or frame for the sole brand luxury retailer (e.g. Moore and Doherty, 2007; Nobbs et al, 2012; Manlow and Nobbs, 2013) New contribution and opportunity for future research for multi brand luxury retailers
How Relational Curation Contributes and Adds Value to the Design and Development of Brand Experience	
Finding	**Contribution/Opportunity for Further Research**
Storytelling brings the curated brand concept alive and establishes the link between editorial curation and physical curation. It supports the creation and delivery of brand experiences by mediating understanding and goes beyond communicating brand values	New contribution and area for future research Supports the museology literature (Roppola, 2014) "Broadening" experience design process
Storytelling may be delivered by various roles both internal and external to the organisation who credibly represent the brand concept or Frame and can enhance the brand experience	Supports the brand literature (Lundqvist et al, 2013) How contributions are made to the brand concept and measured offers an opportunity for future research
Different types of co-created experiences exist by luxury retailer type e.g. management "behind the scenes", fully participative, role enactment and performativity or collaborative and with different emphasis placed on the degree of individual freedom for customers to co-create experiences *For sole brand luxury retailers:* higher level of control and structure of the co-created experience *For multi brand luxury retailers:* focus on the individual to co-create experiences with the luxury brand retailer playing a mediating role	New contribution and opportunity for future research Supports the museology literature (Roppola, 2014) "Broadening" experience design process

8.4. Critical discussion Regarding How Curation is Brought to Life in Luxury Retailing

This final discussion chapter focuses on how curation is brought to life by the 12 curatorial roles identified in the findings as key roles responsible for the design and development of brand experience, both within the luxury retailing organisations, and also in an external collaborative capacity. In addition, this section highlights how the type of curatorial role influences the design and development of brand experience and how the type of curatorial role may be influenced itself by the shape and size of luxury retail organisation.

8.4.1. Curation in the Luxury Retail Organisation

As outlined in the findings in Theme 9, four key observations were made regarding curation in the luxury retail organisation. Firstly, it was acknowledged that the role of the curator is manifested in multiple roles and does not constitute one, omnipotent role. Different types of curatorial roles were observed to exist within the two types of luxury retailers, often with different names or titles, either formally titled or self-created. Some of the roles identified in multi brand luxury retail had similar curatorial focus despite having different titles e.g. Creative Director, Director of Visual Identity and some which were very different e.g. an artistic director in a SBLR who designs the brand collection and influences curatorial activities does not tend to exist in the multi brand retail organisation. The finding that such diversity exists suggests that similar to the changing nature of curation in the cultural environment (Roppola, 2014), it is an evolving form of curation and therefore no one universal definition exists, resulting in numerous meanings and different interpretations of the term. In addition, it highlights that despite many professionals being engaged in curatorial activities in the design and development of brand experience, the lack of a formal definition may hinder formal acknowledgement or recognition that they are undertaking curatorial work.

Secondly, as outlined in Theme 6, it was observed that a network of other functional roles exist that support the key curatorial roles and who are responsible for the delivery of the brand experience, ranging from delivery teams to back of house IT. It was identified that depending on the size of the luxury retail organisation, each network of roles had different sets of dependencies, for example, the creative director and the specialist delivery teams in Selfridges and the artistic director and sales associates in Louis Vuitton. However, despite the various manifestations of the curator role and sets of dependencies, it was observed that the unifying focus across all luxury retailers was the design and development of the brand experience. This finding concurs with the literature highlighted in 2.3.1.1 that curation in the cultural environment is increasingly focused on the experience and has shifted from being one role to multiple, with many types of new curatorial roles contributing to the design of an exhibition experience (e.g. Lee, 2007)

A third observation refers to a hierarchy existing regarding curatorial activity. It was identified that key curatorial activities are undertaken by senior organisational positions, for example the CEO, creative director, artistic director and Director of Visual Identity, who were all identified as being responsible for the key elements of brand curation and setting the direction of the design and development of the brand experience. This suggest that as the first and directional step in the curatorial process, roles responsible for brand curation directed curatorial roles associated with editorial, physical and relational curation, which were undertaken by specialist functional teams, for example, production, online and graphics teams.

A final observation relates to the nature in which the curatorial focus differed according to the size and structure of the organisation. For example, in the case of Selfridges, which sells thousands of luxury brands across multiple lifestyle categories, a unifying brand concept that acted as a blueprint for the design and delivery of brand experience was identified as extremely important. As a result, considerable investment in time and resource is given to the research and development of curated brand concepts. Curated by the Selfridges creative director and team, brand concepts influence the entire organisation, are disseminated across the organisation in big company symposiums and brought to life as brand experiences by multiple delivery teams. Whereas in the physically smaller and more omnichannel focused retailers, for example, Matchesfashion.com, the CEO and buyer focus more heavily on editorial curation and the curation of an “edit” and have smaller creative and delivery teams who are responsible for bringing the curated brand experience to life. In the case of the SBLR, the artistic director was identified to be responsible for the design of brand concepts and the collection itself, highlighting that brand curation is the kernel of brand experience but there are a considerable number of global teams responsible for physical and relational curation supporting the delivery of the concept and experience.

In the brand literature, and described in Chapter 2.2.4, a number of limitations were highlighted. Firstly, there is very little in the literature that examines roles responsible for the design of brand experience in luxury retail organisations or curatorial roles in luxury retail. As outlined in Chapter 2.3, the three main perspectives that refer to curation and curatorial activities in luxury retail organisations (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Dion and Arnould, 2011) refer only to SBLRs, suggesting a limitation of the existing literature. It also highlights the contribution of this research to the literature as both types of luxury retailers (and influences on the different forms of curation emphasised) are examined. Secondly, curation is described only in the context of the differentiation strategies that the SBLRs are claimed to be pursuing, e.g. a “M(Art)World” (Joy et al, 2014), artification (Kapferer, 2015) and adoration marketing through a charismatic artistic director (Dion and Arnould, 2011), which are not necessarily valid for all SBLRs, least of all MBLRs, and therefore cannot be drawn upon to interpret all of the findings. Thirdly, the literature does not describe the dependencies or

relationships between these roles in depth, or in relation to other processes that support the design and development of brand experience within the organisation.

In light of these shortcomings and the number of observations described above, it is suggested that this research has made a first step to address the identified gap in the literature, Gap 6, in Chapter 2.4, Table 2.8, and makes a contribution to the literature with regards to highlighting the nature of curation within luxury retail organisations.

8.4.2. Sole Brand Luxury Retail Curatorial Roles

Of the 12 curatorial roles observed across both types of luxury retailer, only 3 of these are mentioned in the literature as directly contributing to brand experience and all relate to the SBLR only e.g. the organisation itself, the artistic director, sales associates (with occasional collaborators in stores) (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015; Dion and Arnould, 2011). The role of visual merchandisers, identified in Theme 9 relating in the SBLR, is not mentioned in the literature in the context of curation, which broadens the curatorial role landscape in luxury retail.

In light of the discussion of the literature in Chapter 2.3.3.2, where the descriptions of SBLR curatorial roles were also compared to museology definitions, it was observed in the brand literature that the luxury retail corporation was also taking on a curatorial role, which, whilst mentioned, was not fully explored in the findings. However, the findings did concur with the observations in the literature review that the curatorial role of the artistic director may be interpreted to be aligned with the more traditional definition of a curator as defined by Horie (1986) and Ames (1992) due to the emphasis on authority, expertise and collection and influence over the entire experience, and outlined in Chapter 2.3.2, Table 2.6.

In addition, the findings also concurred with the observations in the literature review that the curatorial role of sales associates is more in the mold of a mediator between the brand, products and customers and responsible for creating the brand experience. However, in the findings it was also noted that there is a limit to the degree of mediation as the sales associate role is tightly managed by regimented processes (also observed in the case of visual merchandisers), and therefore, possibly less in a position to mediate genuine exploration and “broadening of self” as described by Roppola (2014) and co-creation of brand experiences with consumers. This suggests that despite SBLRs investing in areas within flagships for customers to relax and interact with the brand, referred to as “third spaces” by Nobbs et al (2012), like the rest of the flagship store, they are designed to reinforce messages about the brand as in a highly managed way (e.g. Varley, 2007; Fernie et al, 1998). This proposes that due to the tendency of the SBLR to reinforce its design vision and ideology, brand heritage and control the brand experience; the curatorial roles responsible for

the design and development of brand experience lean towards a top-down, managerial-view of a luxury brand and brand experience, rather than a more open customer co-creation view. This is supported by the discussion concerning SBLRs in Chapters 8.2 and 8.3, both of which highlight that the meaning of curation and the manifestation of curation in terms of the four forms of curation, brand, editorial, physical and relational, are highly focused on illuminating and reinforcing the brand concept or frame – the unique and artistic provenance of the brand.

8.4.3. Multi Brand Luxury Retail Curatorial Roles

Seven key curatorial roles responsible for the design and development of luxury brand experience were identify by the MBLRs, two of which also identified by the SBLR, visual merchandisers and guest collaborators. However, the literature does not examine curatorial roles in the context of a MBLR, nor does it highlight that curatorial roles may be shared and undertaken by multiple parties, both inside and outside of the organization, which this research has highlighted.

Drawing upon museology literature and Roppola's (2014) Relational Model, it is suggested that the focus of Selfridges to continually generate new ideas and brand experiences not only reinforces its own luxury frame as being an ideas company within the organisation but also ensures consistency with the frame it is using to communicate and deliver experiences to its customers. Arnold's (2009) and Kaniari's (2014) reference to a new type of curatorial practice or discipline concerning exhibitions also helps interpret some of the findings. Arnold's (2009) and Kaniari's (2014) claim that exhibition curation is "ideas-led curation", may also be observed in luxury retail with regards to the strong emphasis placed by MBLRs on brand curation and the existence of senior positions, such as the Creative Director, Director of Visual Identity and CEO, focusing on brand curation regarding the design and development of brand experience. As outlined in Chapter 7.2.1.3, R4 emphasised the importance of continually generating new, curated ideas and concepts as a means of brand experience differentiation and how this was similar to temporary exhibition curation. It is suggested that ideas-driven curation supports the concept of luxury retail curation representing a new form or discipline of curation.

A second example of how roles in multi brand luxury retail bring curation to life and deliver the brand experience refers to the role of the Director of Visual Identity at Liberty and the emphasis placed on physical curation or what is referred to as the "visual architecture" by Arnold (2009) and Kaniari (2014) to deliver the curated brand concept and experience. In light of the considerably smaller and untraditional layout of Liberty, in comparison to Selfridges, it was commented that a number of physical challenges exist in curating a brand experience. Consequently, physical curation, and the curatorial roles responsible for it, were identified by R2 as a means to overcome the building layout constrictions and create a "magic

or power that links everything together in an experience", and one that is similar to a temporary exhibition. This supports Roppola's (2014) reference to "Channeling" experience which refers to curators designing experiences in exhibitions that use spatial elements to support and mediate customer experiences conceptually, attentionally, physically and emotionally.

A third example of how curatorial roles in multi brand luxury retail use curation to design and develop brand experience, refers to the emphasis placed on the curated "edit" as the means of differentiation for the omnichannel luxury retailer, Matchesfashion.com. Identified as a key responsibility of the CEO, buyer and editor, editorial curation was claimed to be fundamental to the success and growth of the organisation, which was highlighted by curation representing one of the organisational pillars that guide the organisation. As highlighted in Chapter 7.2.1.3, the development of a curated edit reflected the unique point of view of the MBLR regarding which luxury brands add the most value to its customers. The process of curating the edit or as described by Roppola (2014) as "Resonating" relates to maximising the quality of resonance between customer and luxury retailer by creating a wow factor or enabling the customer to discover something new and exciting, which is what was described by R1: "it's really about trying to make it feel really delightful so that it's a real experience and you're really discovering something new". The role of the editor as the curator of narratives to educate the customers about the edit and mediate the experience between the luxury products (seen in store or online) and customer (and further enhance the level of resonance) was also identified as critical to a seamless brand experience. Looking through the lens of the cultural definitions of curation, it is suggested that this role may be likened to the fourth perspective in Chapter 2.3 described by Edmonds et al (2009) and Freitas (2011) as a mediator of understanding and interpretation.

The fourth example of how curatorial roles in MBLRs use curation to design and develop brand experience, relates to the findings referring to Relational Curation. As outlined in Theme 8, findings identified that co-creation of experiences, through various mechanisms were identified, from storytelling to participating in the interactive exhibition-type installations in Matchesfashion.com, immersive theatre in Selfridges and even customer role enactment as "honorary shopkeepers". Drawing on Roppola's (2014) reference to "Broadening", the curatorial roles of customer-facing staff were observed to be responsible for bringing the brand concepts to life by mediating customer learning and individual experience through opportunities to fully interact, participate and interact with the brand. This description of curatorial role may be likened to the fifth perspective of the role of curator identified in Chapter 2.3.2, Table 2.6 as a mediation one that focuses on the design and development of a highly participative, immersive experience (e.g. Roppola, 2014; Simon, 2010). It was observed that relational curation in the context of multi brand luxury retail emphasized a greater freedom regarding individual co-creation of experiences, and consequently involved

performativity and higher levels of participation than in sole brand luxury retail due to there being less focus on the preservation of the sole brand image and identity.

8.4.4. Collaborator Curatorial Contributions to the Design and Development of Luxury Brand Experience

Collaborators for both types of luxury retailer were seen as important for bringing the brand experience to life for both types of luxury retailers. For the SBLR, these strategically selected roles were a means of refreshing the brand through trait transference or association with art or renowned people in the public eye, which concurs with the literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Kapferer, 2015).

For the MBLR, however, collaborators were not selected for their celebrity, but rather as a means of creating a new brand concept perspective and their ability to create an invisible thread or link between the products, develop a visual architecture and mediate understanding to bring the brand experience to life (e.g. Arnold, 2009; Kaniari, 2014). It was noted that the employment of collaborators, in the form of temporary ideas-led exhibition curators, was more prevalent in MBLRs, with roles spanning across editorial, physical and relational forms of curation. The desired curatorial skills of the temporary exhibition curator in luxury retail are observed to be related to their experience in delivering similar experiences in the cultural environment, which are characterised by Roppola (2014: p.12) who states: “exhibitions draw on endless combinations, innovatively reconstituting content and ideas into outward form, in ways that cannot always be anticipated. Such is the intriguing nature of exhibition design”. This reinforces the findings in Theme 7, that the type of curation in temporary exhibitions and MBLRs share many similarities and indicates the increasingly blurring of experiences between the two environments.

8.4.5. Conclusion

Given the paucity in the literature concerning curatorial roles in luxury retail, these findings offer a new contribution to the literature and present an opportunity for further research into the nature and evolution of these roles.

This discussion highlights that curation exists and is brought to life by not just three roles identified in the existing brand literature; the corporation itself, the artistic director, sales associates and the occasional guest collaborators, but by a greater number of roles across the organisation. The different curatorial activities observed for each type of role, and presented in this research in discussion chapters 8.2 and 8.3 offer a contribution to the literature as they acknowledge and confirm, alongside the Four Forms of Curation, that

curation does play a major part in the design and development of brand experiences in the luxury retail environment. Further, that external roles, in the form of guest collaborators and exhibition curators add to and influence the brand experience through their contributions of adding value to the brand itself (SBLRs) or input across the four forms of curation.

Figure 8.2 highlights the key curatorial roles identified in the findings that are responsible for the design and development of a luxury brand experience. As the different types of curatorial activities cover the Four Forms of Curation it is described as the "Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix". It also includes the sole brand curatorial role classification from the literature in order to highlight how this research has taken steps to address research objective 3 and Gap 7 in Chapter 2.3.3, Table 2.8.

Figure 8.2: Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix

Four forms of Curation	Brand Curation			Editorial Curation	Physical Curation	Relational Curation	
Type of Luxury Retailer	Research	Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts	Acquiring Knowledge	Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View	Art of Display	Storytelling	Experience
Sole Brand Luxury Retailer Roles							
Luxury Corporation	Corporate curatorial role in developing the brand as a cultural institution in its own right (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015)						
Artistic Director	Development of a brand ideology that frames the entire brand experience (Dion and Arnould, 2011)						
Visual Merchandisers					Responsible for product and display curation in accordance to the artistic director's brand direction		
Sales Associates						Sales associates	Sales associates are responsible for transmitting the key brand messages and creating experiences (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011)
Guest Collaborators				Contribute to the curation of products and new physical brand experiences			
Multi Brand Luxury Retailer Roles							
CEO	Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation						
Creative Director	Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation						
Director of Visual Identity	Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation						
Buyer				Responsible for curating the "edit" as a means of differentiation for the Multi Brand Luxury Retailer			
Editor				Responsible for developing narratives to support the communication of the curated edit as a means of differentiation for the Multi Brand Luxury Retailer across all channels			
Specialist Delivery Teams					Responsible for the implementing the brand concept e.g. Graphics team, Window Display, Visual Merchandising, Installation Teams	Sales associates are responsible for the delivery of the curated brand experience and facilitating individual experiences with the brand	
Collaborators		Contribution to the brand concept			Contribution to the physical realisation of the brand concept		

This matrix is the first step towards understanding how curation is brought to life in luxury retailing from a role perspective. However, this matrix suggests there is opportunity for further research. For example, it would be helpful to identify if other curatorial roles exist through a

deeper analysis across the luxury retail organisations and differentiate between roles that are responsible, accountable or support only. It would also be helpful to identify nature of the dependency within the network of curatorial roles in order to examine how the dynamic between the roles influences the curated brand experience. An investigation of how the relationships between the roles are connected in detail, using, for example, the Actor-Network Theory of co-production (Latour, 2005), or in practice, the RACI project management tool[35], may shed further light on how the roles connect. An additional area of interest would be to examine the relationship between brand curation and the "magic" link or invisible thread that was identified by both the findings and by Arnold (2009) in physical curation, and how this is influenced by the different curatorial roles across the four forms of curation. In light of the increasing importance of omnichannel retailing, another opportunity for future research would be to include a third dimension to the model, channels, to identify the nature of decision-making between the curatorial roles, which may further illuminate how experiences can be "seamlessly" developed.

A final consideration regarding the existence of various curatorial roles outlined by the matrix, is the acknowledgement that different curatorial capabilities and skills exist. This implies that the management of curation may vary according to the four forms of curation and the multiple roles within each form of curation. Drawing on curatorial skills and capabilities rather than titles,Table 8.5 provides an example of how luxury retailers can approach curation management in luxury retail. The example "Strategic Framework of Luxury Retail Curation Management" identifies the different levels of skills and capabilities across each of the four forms of curation, delineating them as Levels 1-4. Level 1 is defined as the most junior level and Level 4 is presented as possessing the highest level of expertise, skill and capability. The levels could also include the anticipated degree of value to be generated, managerial responsibility or experience possessed. This framework provides an example of how management can strategically structure curatorial activities within the organisation, resource and ultimately, adapt the required management style and approach across the four forms of curation. It makes a first contributory step towards luxury curation management and offers an opportunity for further research.

[35] The RACI Model is a project management tool that describes different roles people play e.g. "R" responsible relates to the individual who actually works on the activity or the "doer"; "A" accountable relates to the individual with the actual yes or no decision-right over the activity; "C" refers to consulted and the individual who is to be consulted before the process can proceed and finally, "I" informed relates to the individual who needs to know an activity is occurring but not part of the process (Sugiyama and Schmidt, 2013)

Table 8.5: An Example: A Strategic Framework of Luxury Retail Curation Management

Form of Luxury Retail Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience	Level of Curation Capability and Management			
	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Brand Curation				
Research	Supports the identification of ideas that reinforces the brand identify and vision	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the identification of ideas that reinforces the brand identify and vision	Leads the identification of ideas that reinforce the brand identity and vision. Responsible for the research and interpretation of brand concepts and ideas across global markets	Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation
Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts	Supports the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position. Manages the process of sieving and filtering brand concepts and developing brand concept risk evaluations	Leads the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position. Responsible for filtering all brand concepts and managing brand risk. Produces the organisational blueprint for implementation across the organisation	Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation. Responsible for the development of brand concepts across different luxury retail channels and store formats
Acquiring Knowledge	Supports the acquisition and development of knowledge	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the acquisition and development of knowledge	Leads the acquisition and development of knowledge. Leads collaboration and partnership strategies for knowledge acquisition	Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation
Editorial Curation				
Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View	Supports the curation of an "edit" and concept platform building across all channels	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the curation of an "edit" and concept platform building across all channels	Leads the curation of an "edit" including selection and interpretation and concept platform building across all channels	Responsible for the Editorial Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation
Physical Curation				
Art of Display	Supports the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display	Leads the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display	Responsible for the Physical Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation
Relational Curation				
Storytelling	Supports the development of storytelling	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of storytelling	Leads the development of storytelling to support the curated brand concept and luxury brand experience	Responsible for the Relational Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation.
Experience	Supports the development of co-creation experiences	Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of co-creation experiences	Leads the development of co-creation experiences and development and integration with curatorial consumer communities	Responsible for the Relational Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation.

Note: Level 4 is represented in this example as the highest level of curatorial expertise, competency and skill. It could also, for example, reflect qualification level, managerial responsibility, expected value to be generated or feedback from other managers. In addition, the descriptions for the responsibilities at each level could be tailored with examples of how the roles support each other across the organisation and outline specific curatorial activities and contributions.

To conclude, the finding that multiple roles exist across the two types of luxury retailers suggests that curation in luxury retail may represent a new and different type of discipline that has evolved from the traditional associations of art-history curation to one that is focused on the design and development of brand experience. This new luxury retail curation discipline consists of multiple curatorial roles within four different forms of curation, suggesting that a new approach or practice of curation management is required. It is, therefore, hoped that this research enriches existing knowledge regarding the role of curation in luxury retail and ignites further enquiry into the nature of the new discipline of curation of luxury brand experiences and the luxury retail curation management. Table 8.6 provides a summary of how the curatorial roles differ between the two types of luxury brand retailers, the contributions this research has made and how it addresses research objective 3, as well as opportunities for future research.

Table 8.6: Observed Curatorial Roles Responsible for the Design and Development of a Luxury Brand Experience: Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research

Contribution to the Literature and Suggested Opportunities for Further Research – **Curatorial Roles that Bring Curation to Life and Design and Develop a Luxury Brand Experience**	
Brand Curation	
Sole Brand Luxury Retailer Roles	**Multi Brand Luxury Retailer Roles**
Led by the Artistic Director and the brand ideology	Led by senior management positions e.g. CEO, Creative Director Supported by Creative Director Teams (research of the brand concepts)
Focuses on the brand concept as a means to build and reinforce the brand Emphasis on "Brand Building"	Focuses on the brand concept as a means to create its own frame of reference, but most importantly to use the thematic concept as a means to pull together or build an invisible thread to connect multiple brands and brand stories Emphasis on "Brand Concept Building"
Supports existing literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014) Opportunity for future research to examine a broader sample of sole brand luxury retailers	Supports the museology literature regarding "Framing" (Roppola, 2014) New contribution to the brand literature Opportunity for future research to examine a broader sample of multi brand luxury retailers and apply the Four Forms of Curation framework
Editorial Curation	
Sole Brand Luxury Retailer	**Multi Brand Luxury Retailer**
Led by the Artistic Director to select the themes for the season to reinforce the brand identity, image and ensure the brand is continually renewed and refreshed e.g. through collaborations Guest collaborators collaborate on a curated edit of luxury products or even the design of a special, edition of a product	Led by the CEO/Buyer to select brands to curate an "edit" which represents the multi brand luxury retailers unique selling proposition and point of difference vis-à-vis competitors Led also by the Editor regarding the development of curated narratives to support the brand concept Guest collaborators curate "edits" as a means of differentiation
Supports existing literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014) Comparison with museology literature makes a new contribution	Supports the museology literature regarding "Resonating" (Roppola, 2014) New contribution to the literature
Physical Curation	
Sole Brand Luxury Retailer	**Multi Brand Luxury Retailer**
Led by the Artistic Director to determine physical curation layout and design but delivered by visual merchandisers in store Guest collaborators invited to curate and contribute to the brand experience Building a platform that brings the brand identity to life	Led by Director of Visual Identity, CEO, Creative Director but delivered by specialist delivery teams e.g. visual merchandisers Temporary exhibition curators employed to design and develop physical curation Building a platform that brings the brand concept to life
Supports existing literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015) Comparison with museology literature makes a new contribution	Supports the museology literature regarding "Channeling" New contribution to the literature Opportunity for future research to examine the interaction between guest collaborators and luxury retailer roles with curatorial responsibilities
Relational Curation	
Sole Brand Luxury Retailer	**Multi Brand Luxury Retailer**
Narratives that support the brand ideology created for sales associates to deliver brand messages and services that reinforce the brand image, ideology and identity Sales teams are trained to mediate understanding of the brand messages and identity	Customer-facing sales teams bring the brand concept to life through interactive, participative experiences and mediating individual understanding and co-creation of the experience
Supports existing literature (e.g. Dion and Arnould, 2011; Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015) yet findings conflict with the literature that claims sales associates mediate understanding of art Comparison with museology literature makes a new contribution	Supports the museology literature regarding "Broadening" New contribution to the literature Opportunity for future research to examine the different methods of mediation of individual experiences

9. Conclusion

This thesis has explored the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment through an investigative, qualitative and thematic analysis-based study of 17 senior professionals in the luxury retail and cultural environments.

The thesis focused on three research objectives: firstly, to gain an understanding of the meaning of curation in luxury retail and identify the role, purpose and value to luxury retailers; secondly, to explore the different ways in which curation manifests itself in the luxury retail environment, and thirdly, to identify how curation is brought to life through curatorial roles within luxury retail organisations.

In order to address these objectives, the thesis was structured across 8 chapters, which are now summarised. The original contribution of this thesis is also presented, regarding the research aim, objectives and the key contributions made. In light of the contributions made, the implications for management are reviewed, concluding with the limitations of the research and avenues for future research.

9.1. Summary of the Thesis: Addressing the Research Objectives

The first step of addressing the research objectives was to examine the literature. The literature review was structured in two sections, the first section was concerned with the luxury retail sector, brands, luxury brands and brand experience and the second section focused on curation and the role of the curator. In light of the paucity in the brand literature regarding curation, this thesis adopted the lens of the cultural environment to explore the meaning of curation in luxury retailing. Across both sections of the literature review, seven gaps were identified relating to luxury brands, luxury brand experience and curation in luxury retail. Whilst it was identified that all seven gaps relate to the research topic to some degree, the examination of all seven were beyond the scope of this thesis. Therefore, only 2 gaps, which were observed to relate directly to the three research objectives were addressed. These gaps refer to the nature in which luxury brand experiences are developed and the role of curation in luxury retail, and are reviewed in the Discussion chapter.

Chapters 3 and 4 examined the research method, methodology and data collection and analysis. It was acknowledged that the sample population of this research is small with 17 senior professionals and practitioners, however, this reflects the interpretivist approach of the research and the research aim to conduct an in-depth exploration of the meaning of curation and its role in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment. Chapter 4 presented data collection and analysis, including the adoption and implementation of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Six Stages of Thematic Analysis. Each step of

the process was highlighted to provide transparency of how the data was analysed and resulted in 9 key themes.

The nine key themes were explored in detail in Chapters 5-7. The first findings chapter, Chapter 5 examined themes 1-4, which were concerned with the broader environment regarding the evolution of consumer desires and trends and how and why curation has come to be seen as a relevant, and potentially valuable, concept or idea in luxury retailing. The concept of curation was identified to support and deliver differentiated brand experiences and in doing so, offer new forms of value. Chapter 6 examined themes 5-7, regarding how the concept of curation is understood in luxury retailing and also in comparison to the cultural environment of museums and exhibitions. It was identified that what was once a relatively simple, domain-specific concept has developed into a multi-dimensional and inter-disciplinary concept that defies a universal definition. The meaning of curation was acknowledged to have evolved from the traditional, art-historian perspective. It was observed to be an experience-centric modus operandi that creates a brand-concept driven link between brands and products to deliver a multi-sensory experience and mediate consumer understanding and participation. Chapter 7 examined themes 8 and 9, regarding how curation is manifested in luxury retailing. Seven key curatorial activities were identified to exist in luxury retail. Whilst the curatorial activities differed in emphasis across the two different types of luxury retailer, they shared the key steps in the design and development of brand experience. Influences on the types of curatorial activities found in each luxury retailer were observed to be the size and structure of the luxury retail organisation.

In Theme 9, it was observed that different types of curatorial roles exist within the SBLR and MBLRs throughout the entire organisational structure. Different curatorial activities were observed to support the design and development of brand experience, e.g.: brand concept curation in senior roles, editorial curation in buying and brand communication roles, product and display curation in visual merchandising, store manager and sales associate roles and finally, storytelling and co-curation of experiences with consumers in customer-facing roles. Guest curators supporting editorial and physical curatorial activities were also observed to contribute to the design and development of brand experience. Finally, it was observed that a network of different curatorial roles existed, each being connected in various ways to each other. The existence of a network of roles across the four forms of curation highlighted that there does not exist one, omnipotent curator role, but rather a set of roles which contribute to the design and development of brand experience.

Finally, Chapter 8 discussed how the findings address the research objectives and contribute to the identified gaps in the literature. Chapter 8.2 addressed research objective number one regarding the meaning, role, purpose and value of curation to luxury retailers. It is suggested that due to the inclusion of MBLRs, unlike previous studies in the literature (e.g. Joy et al,

2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011), this research makes several contributions. It was observed that the meaning of curation in luxury retail has evolved from the traditional art-historian definition of curation to one that is experience-centric and focuses on mediation of meaning and participation. Curation was also identified to be a new modus operandi for developing a link between concepts and products to deliver a multi-sensory immersive experience, therefore concurring with the museology literature (e.g. Arnold, 2009; Lord, 2014; Roppola, 2014) yet contradicting the brand literature, which refers to a definition of curation that is over 25 years old (e.g. Joy et al's (2014) reference to the definition of curation provided by Ames (1992)). Regarding the role of curation, it was observed to be a means of differentiation for the SBLR through the medium of art, which supports the existing literature (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014). For the MBLRs, it was observed to be a means of differentiation through the medium of ideas, concepts and themes, which was observed to be similar to temporary ideas-led exhibitions. This supports the museology literature (Arnold, 2009) and provides a new contribution to the brand literature. With regards to the value of curation, three forms were identified, organisational, financial and experiential, all of which make new contributions to the literature.

Chapter 8.3 addressed research objective number two and both literature gaps, focusing on the manifestation of curation in luxury retail and as a consequence, how luxury brand experiences are developed. From the seven curatorial activities, four different forms of curation were identified: brand curation, editorial curation, physical curation and relational curation, and all were observed to contribute to the design and development of a luxury brand experience. Drawing on the findings, a new working framework of luxury retail curation was developed, Four Forms of Curation. It was observed that the forms of curation are sequential and vary in emphasis depending on the type of luxury retailer and the differentiation strategy being pursued. A contribution was made by linking of the Four Forms of Curation Framework to an existing theoretical framework in the museology literature, Roppola's (2014) Relational Model. It was observed that all four forms of curation relate to the four processes of exhibition design, for example, "Framing" and Brand Curation, "Resonating" and Editorial Curation, "Channeling" and Physical Curation and lastly, "Broadening" and Relational Curation. The linkage of the Four Forms of Curation framework with Roppola's (2014) Relational Model offers a new customer-centric perspective of curatorial processes that contributes to the design and development of brand experience. In addition, it responds to the call in the literature for a more customer-centric view of luxury brands (e.g. Roper et al, 2013; Tynan et al, 2010) and holistic view of brand experiences (e.g. Foster and McLelland, 2015; Seo and Buchanan-Oliver, 2015). Both models provide new opportunities for further enquiry.

Finally, Chapter 8.4 addressed research objective number three and the second gap in the literature, regarding the role of the curator in luxury retail. Twelve curatorial roles were identified, extending the existing brand literature (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould,

2011), which presents only three different types of curatorial roles, and limited to SBLRs only. Drawing on the findings, a second working framework, the Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix, was developed which highlights how the roles contribute to the Four Forms of Curation. Description of the roles in the SBLR findings concurred with the brand literature (Joy et al, 2014) regarding a similar orientation to the traditional permanent collection definition of a curator. In contrast, it was observed that the 7 roles in the MBLR organisation were similar to curatorial roles in temporary ideas-led exhibitions. Given that there is very little in the literature regarding curation in MBLRs, these findings make a new contribution and highlight an opportunity for further research. Finally, a further contribution was made regarding curation management of the various curatorial roles in the form of a Strategic Framework of Curation Management, providing another opportunity for future research.

9.2. The Original Contribution

To conclude, my original contribution to the literature is that this research is one of the first empirical studies to explore the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment and has resulted in various new findings, which are summarised as three key contributions.

Firstly, the research has confirmed that the role of curation is an influential one in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury retail environment and is manifested in multiple ways across both sole brand and multi brand luxury retailers. In light of the paucity in the literature regarding the design and development of luxury brand experiences and the rise of omnichannel retailing, it is suggested that the research findings highlight to luxury retailers that curation comprises a strategic framework or scaffold upon which to build a seamless brand experience. The scaffold consists of four key elements: brand, editorial, physical and relational curation.

Brand curation facilitates luxury retailers to develop a core transformative idea that is filtered or “sieved” by the brand position and values and acts as a frame to help consumers make sense of the brand. In addition, the curated or “sieved” brand concept serves as a strategic tool for luxury retailers in two key ways. Firstly, it serves as an organisational blueprint for the development to ensure consistent delivery of the brand experience across multiple channels throughout the organisation. Secondly, the curated “sieve” serves as a form of strategic risk management for luxury retailers, in that it represents a method in which to determine which concepts or ideas are not “on brand” and therefore, may be potentially damaging or inconsistent with the brand identity, are not developed further or implemented.

Editorial curation reinforces brand authority, sensibility and connoisseurship through the development and showcasing of a unique edit of a collection of products or brands, as means

of differentiation for the brand, as well as providing a holistic platform for brand communications that resonate with consumers. Guided by brand and editorial curation, physical curation, product and display, brings the brand concept to life in the form of multi-sensory and immersive experiences in stores. Curated physical experiences are designed to increase footfall in-store and create opportunities for consumer intimacy with the brand, as well as supporting the online proposition. Relational curation mediates the development of meaningful relationships with customers through compelling narratives, storytelling and the facilitation of co-created experiences.

Secondly, curation in luxury retail has evolved from the traditional art-historian discipline of curation and is identified as emerging as a new discipline and modus operandi in its own right with various curatorial roles existing in luxury retail. All of the different roles identified contribute to the four forms of curation with the intent of delivering a differentiated experience. As the findings highlight, emphasis on each of the different forms of curation varies according to the type and strategic focus of the luxury retailer. For example, the SBLR focuses on brand curation from the perspective of building and reinforcing a revered brand position and identity. In contrast, the MBLR focuses on brand curation from the perspective of developing a core idea that unifies multiple brands and is the basis of a transformative experience. The type of strategic focus and resulting retail strategies e.g. “Artification” in the case of the SBLR, influences how luxury retail curation relates and is connected to the cultural origins of curation. This influence is highlighted by the identified similarities between the traditional art-historian exhibition and perspective of curation and the SBLR’s physical curation of brand experience; and between the temporary ideas-led exhibition form of curation and the MBLR’s brand concept focus of curated brand experiences.

Thirdly, curation has been identified as a value-creation activity from three key perspectives. The first perspective of curation is organisational from a strategic and an operational level. On a strategic level, curation is a means of differentiation, a route to competitive advantage and a path for future growth as a global, omnichannel luxury brand retailer. On an organisational level, curation aligns the organisation to achieve its strategic objectives and cohesively deliver a consistent and holistic brand experience, as well as simultaneously acting as a brand risk management tool. The second perspective is financial; positioning curation as a conduit to drive footfall online and in-store, increase consumer desire and motivation to purchase. The third perspective of curation is from a perceived consumer perspective, as a means of delivering an enhanced, positive brand experience, developed by experts or cultural mediators who are subtle, yet powerful endorsers of consumer choice. This is an important new way for luxury brand retailers to gain endorsement and credibility without reverting to celebrity or other overtly commercial means.

These three contributions address the three research objectives and the two key gaps identified in the literature. They confirm that curation does have a role in the design and development of brand experience in luxury retail in four key forms and is brought to life by the twelve key curatorial roles.

However, the three key contributions described highlight a further three broader considerations and set of original contributions. Firstly, that this research advances the sociological perspective of curation in luxury. Luxury retail curation in isolation makes no sense from an individual view as it is concerned with the generation of a shared sense of delight of discovery, belonging and experience between the luxury brand and consumers. Whilst the literature acknowledges that luxury retailer stores e.g. SBLR flagships are developing into "communities of affluence" (Nobbs et al, 2012), there is little in the literature that delineates how these, or other, types of communities of luxury are being built. This research highlights that curation facilitates the creation of community in the luxury retail environment, both from within a luxury retail organisation, for example, the network of curatorial roles that work together across a luxury retailer; and outside of the luxury retail organisation, for example, the consumer community that is an integral part of, and active participative group of, the curated co-created luxury brand experience. In light of the increasing desire on the part of consumers for authentic luxury brand experiences, where emotional connections may be made, not only between the brand, but also between like-minded consumers in the luxury brand community, it is suggested that this research highlights an opportunity for future research concerning the role of curation in the development of the luxury brand community.

Secondly, this research also illustrates that, as outlined in the Four Forms of Curation, the curatorial activity of identifying and developing the best ideas for luxury brand concepts or identifying and sourcing the best luxury designers, brands or collaborations from around the world is a form of globalisation. The luxury brand retailer who selects and curates the best from around the world, ultimately brings the world to the luxury brand community. The concepts, brands and collections that are brought to the door of the luxury brand community have been framed as highly desirable, legitimized and endorsed through the power of the curated edit presented by the luxury brand. The global curated edit, both online and in-store, therefore builds global reputation and value and may be perceived to demonstrate "soft globalisation", in comparison to the traditional "hard globalisation" of investing in and opening stores across the world.

The third consideration and original contribution refers to a hierarchy of curation with respect to the geography of physical stores. Whilst the MBLRs tend not to invest in large physical flagships around the world and instead have few "destination" physical spaces and a strong focus online, the SBLRs have made considerable capital investments in multiple tier-type

stores in capital and provincial cities to extend their presence. For these luxury brand retailers, this suggests that there is a geographical hierarchy of curation, where the main curatorial focus is on the flagship stores in top tier cities, such as the architecturally renowned Louis Vuitton Maisons in Paris, London, New York, Shanghai and Tokyo. The role of these flagship stores is to act as the physical representation of the aesthetic vision of the artistic director, showcasing and embodying all elements of the brand and making the brand a reality. Consequently, not only do the Maisons receive the entire seasonal collection and host the most exclusive events and shows, but also they also receive the highest investment in the curation of displays and experiences developed by the global Visual Image Director, Faye McLeod, and are the main destination for high profile curation collaborations. The 2nd and 3rd tier provincial cities, home to the smaller stores, due to their size receive a diluted version of the Maison curated experience. In addition, the curatorial responsibility is placed with teams of visual merchandisers and the local store personnel, who are required to follow the issued curatorial vision and principles regimentally to ensure consistency. This suggests that the imparting of value generated by curatorial activities varies by geographic location of the stores, as the curatorial roles responsible for Maisons or 2nd or 3rd tier city stores vary in expertise and contribution to the design and development of the luxury brand experience. This contribution identifies a further opportunity for future research regarding the nature in which the curatorial approach may differ by geography and the resulting impact on the luxury brand experiences across the different types of stores.

With these contributions in mind, the implications for management are now discussed.

9.3. Management Implications

In light of the original contributions discussed, several implications for luxury retail managers exist and are now presented. This chapter aims to highlight firstly, the different forms of value curation provides luxury retail management. Secondly, how the different frameworks derived and developed from the findings, Chapter 9.0, and in detail in Chapters 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4, can act as a strategic toolkit to support managers in their curatorial activities to design and develop a differentiated luxury brand experience, gain the competitive advantage and build a platform for future growth. By way of summary, Table 8.7 highlights the different forms of value curation offers luxury retailers and the implications for luxury retail management.

Table 8.7: Summary of the Forms of Curation Value in Luxury Retail and Implications for Management

Form of Value of Curation	Contributions	Description	Implications for Management
Strategic	Curation is a growth strategy that differentiates the brand by developing and offering a unique brand experience	A differentiation strategy is a route to competitive advantage and a platform for future growth. For physical stores, a differentiated, curated brand experience increases footfall and for online stores, it increases sales as a destination that provides a highly desirable and covetable edit and experience unavailable elsewhere.	• To ensure that the curatorial strategy and in-store and online activities are aligned, consistent with the short and long-term market differentiation strategic objectives • To strategically invest in the acquisition of talent and required curatorial skills and capabilities to maintain the competitive differentiation position. This may go beyond the existing internal pool of talent and require strategic collaborations, for example, with artists and curation consultants from the cultural environment • To utilise curation as a "soft globalisation" expansion strategy into new markets
	Curation supports the development of seamless, omnichannel luxury brand retail strategy	The Four Forms of Curation framework highlights that brand, editorial, physical and relational forms of curation enables the organisation to develop and implement brand experiences that integrate on and offline.	• To communicate and continually reinforce (especially for predominantly physical store-focused luxury brand retailers who are attempting to increase their online presence) that the luxury brand is an omnichannel retailer with a new set of strategic objectives that are shared between all channels • Highly visible senior management commitment with shared accountability is critical across all channels
Organisational	Provision of a common vernacular	The Four Forms of Curation is a framework or scaffold that management can draw upon as a common vernacular, therefore aiding the alignment of understanding and curatorial direction.	• To utilise the Four Forms of Curation to build awareness, communicate recognition of curation within the organisation and educate concerning the different types of curational activities within the organisation and how they fit together to support the design and development of brand experience and add value
	Provision of a modus operandi	The Four Forms of Curation is a framework that management can utilise to identify the key, sequential curatorial steps required to design and develop a luxury brand experience.	• To evaluate existing curatorial activities and identify the gaps or opportunities to develop the organisational curatorial capability further, which will depend on the type of luxury brand retailer and its strategic objectives
	Provision of an organisational blueprint	Brand concept curation provides the organisation with an organisational blueprint that serves as the guidepost for the other forms of curation.	• To champion and resource the blueprint throughout the organisation to ensure that every front and back office department fully supports it and therefore enables it to become a genuinely seamless omnichannel experience
	Curation is a Brand Risk Management Tool	Brand curation includes activities that sieve and filter ideas, concepts and activities that support the brand but also those that may be damaging to the damage, therefore acting as a brand risk management tool.	• To formally utilise the brand concept development phase as a "sieve" regarding suitability of brand concepts to differentiate the brand experience and ensure that they are appropriate and achievable • To ensure that the brand ideology, philosophy and identity is fully understood and embedded. In addition, that the roles responsible for the sieving or filtering of brand ideas and concepts are not only fully conversant of the existing and future, potential position of the brand but act as brand ambassadors and champions
	Identification of multiple curatorial roles and provision of a Luxury Brand Retail Curatorial Matrix and Strategic Framework for Curation Management	The Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix highlights the diverse network of curatorial roles within the organisation and their contributions to the design and development of a luxury brand experience. The Strategic Framework for Curation Management highlights the different types and levels of curatorial capability and skill by the four forms of curation.	• To evaluate existing curatorial capability within the organisation against the curation strategy required to deliver the luxury brand experience and impart strategic value • To utlise the Strategic Framework of Curation Management to audit and assess capability and conduct talent and resource planning • In order to sustain the delivery of differentiated brand experiences, it may be required to recruit employees with different curatorial-focused talent e.g. concept visionaries as brand curators, tastemaker/cultural intermediaries as editor curators, visual thinkers as display curators, storytellers as relational curators • To establish a professional curatorial network to draw upon external resources to acquire specialised curatorial knowledge and capability flexibly as required • Investment is required to develop curatorial skills across the organisation to ensure consistency of curatorial activities and professional standards
	A geographical hierarchy of curation exists	In the case of the luxury brand retailers who have invested in a multi-tier retail outlet structure, there exists a hierarchy of curation according to geography. Flagships receive the main curatorial investment and focus and smaller stores receive a distillation due to size and resources.	• To deliver a seamless luxury brand experience, the interpretation of the curated experience in the flagships must be produced with consistent production values or there is a risk of the brand losing credibility and its integrity. Visual merchandisers and store personnel who are responsible for curatorial activities must be trained and developed to act as brand ambassadors of the artistic or visual director to ensure cohesiveness and consistency across all elements of the brand experience
Financial	Curation intensifies the motivation to consume and increases sales	A curated luxury brand experience engages consumers by offering opportunities to engage and contribute to the luxury brand experience, thereby creating a stronger motivation to visit stores, go online and purchase.	• Positive curated luxury brand experiences in store or online lead to increased sales, consumer loyalty and strong brand equity. In order to quantify the impact, a requirement for management is to identify the critical success factors of curation in-store and online and develop a metric and measurement system in order to assess how curation contributes to and generates revenue
Experiential	Curation enhances the customer experience and brand loyalty	A co-created luxury brand experience increases the emotional connection between the consumer and brand resulting in higher brand loyalty.	• To design and develop authentic opportunities for consumers to co-create luxury brand experiences, customer facing staff roles must become mediators of meaning • Recognise the desire of consumers to be the creative, enabling performativity, personal curation and driving the development of an influential curatorial community

This research has identified four key forms of value that curation can provide for management, including strategic, organisational, financial and experiential, and, as observed in Table 8.7, outlines the managerial implications for each. From a strategic perspective, curation presents luxury retailers with not only a means of differentiation and a route to competitive advantage, with regards to the design and development of an innovative, holistic brand experience that enables them to more effectively meet the needs of its target consumers and sets it apart from competitors, but importantly, a new platform for growth. Curation is ultimately about growth from a business perspective in the luxury retail environment. Luxury retail curation drives how brand experiences are designed and developed in innovative ways to enable an increase footfall in the internet age and connect the shopping experience on and offline, therefore offering a highly innovative omnichannel proposition and opportunity for growth. From its roots in art-history, curation in the luxury retail environment has unexpectedly and surreptitiously become a new path of future growth. It answers the questions "how do we get people into our stores that we have heavily invested in and cannot afford to fail?" and "how do we create a unique brand experience on and offline that customers love and return to?" The ultimate task of curation is, therefore, to address these questions and generate revenue for future growth.

The implications for management refer to ensuring that the existing curatorial activities are aligned with and support a differentiation strategy. In the context of an omnichannel strategy, curation may not only be used as a differentiation strategy in existing markets but also be employed as a "soft globalisation" entry method, bringing the best curated brands and products of the world to new international markets through its online proposition. This requires investment not only in the acquisition of talent and required curatorial skills across all channels to deliver and maintain the competitive differentiated position, but also visible senior management commitment with shared accountability across all channels to deliver the curated luxury brand experience. For example, the findings highlight the power and resource invested in Selfridges Creative Director and delivery teams to create and implement organisation-wide brand concepts. As with any successful organisation-wide projects, visible commitment and support from senior management is critical, as is having the right people in place with the right skillsets.

With regards to the organisational value of curation, six key contributions and managerial implications are presented. Firstly, in light of the semantic diversity regarding the definition, understanding and usage of curation-related terms, the "Four Forms of Curation" framework (Table 8.3) provides managers with the first step towards the establishment of a common vernacular and understanding. The implication of the framework for management is that they can utilise it as a tool to build awareness and educate the organisation concerning the different types of curatorial activities, how they fit together to support the design and development of brand experience and add value.

Secondly, as presented by the Four Forms of Curation framework, curation offers management a sequential and structured modus operandi to design and develop a holistic, omnichannel brand experience. This may take any form, for example, if a SBLR wishes to curate brand concepts to renew and refresh the image of an existing heritage luxury brand, or if a MBLR wishes to curate a new concept or directional theme for a new season in conjunction with a new range of luxury brands it is introducing. The role and purpose of the Four Forms of Curation framework is to provide luxury retailers with a scaffold or the architecture to curate a concept, regardless of the content, and design and develop a transformative experience through the integration of editorial, physical and relational activities. The implication of the framework for management is that they can evaluate and assess their existing curatorial activities and identify opportunities where they can develop the organisational curatorial capability further and harness curation as means to design and develop a differentiated luxury brand experience. For example, managers can review each of the four forms of curation and identify the key requirements to design and develop a luxury brand experience, for example, development of narratives, storytelling and co-creation of experience opportunities for customers. A further implication for managers is that they may also use the curatorial activities outlined as a way to identify and benchmark current brand experience against those experiences offered by the competition in order to refine and differentiate the brand experience proposition.

The third organisational value contribution refers to the output of brand curation, one of the four forms of curation. Brand concept curation provides the organisation with an organisational blueprint that serves as the guidepost for all other forms of curation, ensuring consistency throughout the design and development process of the luxury brand experience. The implication for management is to champion and resource the blueprint appropriately throughout the organisation to ensure that every department fully supports it and, therefore, enables the brand concept to translate and develop into a genuinely seamless omnichannel luxury brand experience successfully.

The fourth organisational value contribution also refers to brand curation but in the context of a brand risk management tool. The findings and literature highlight that in the case of the SBLR, brand concepts are derived from the aesthetic vision of the artistic director whose authority and expertise have a considerable level of control and influence over all elements of the brand identity. Similarly, in the case of Selfridges, the brand identity is so clearly understood that it acts as its own “sieve” regarding the selection and development of brand concepts. The “sieve” serves as a metaphor for risk management and therefore, its role is to prevent ideas or concepts to be developed that may damage the brand. This level of clarity regarding the brand itself, for both sole and multi brand retailers, enables luxury retailers to remain focused and consistent throughout the other three forms of curation. In addition, it suggests that by strictly adhering to the artistic director’s aesthetic interpretation of the brand

in the case of SBLRs and by “sieving” creative concepts in the case of MBLRs, luxury retailers are actively employing curation as a brand risk management strategy that depends on an engrained understanding of the brand. This implication for management is that brand curation, as an activity within the context of the Four Forms of Curation framework, may be adopted by luxury retailers as an important mechanism for brand managers to manage risk. Managers can formally utilise the brand concept development phase as a “sieve” regarding the suitability of brand concepts to differentiate the brand experience and ensure that they are appropriate, achievable and enhance the brand proposition. A second implication for management is to ensure, however, that the roles responsible for the sieving of brand concepts have a deep knowledge and understanding of the brand ideology, philosophy and identity upon which to assess brand risk.

The fifth organisational contribution and implication for management relates to the identification of different curatorial skills and competencies within the organisation. The Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix (Figure 8.2) highlights the network of curatorial roles within luxury retail organisations and how they contribute to the design and development of a luxury brand experience. The implication of the matrix for management is that it provides luxury retail managers with an opportunity to identify and map the curatorial roles and capabilities that exist and create value, or those that require closer integration or alignment with other roles within the organisation or external collaborators in order to impart greater value.

In connection with the management of curation and curatorial roles, the Strategic Framework of Curation Management (Table 8.5) also provides a contribution to management practice. This framework highlights the different types and levels of curatorial capability and skill in the context of the four forms of curation. The implication of this framework for management is that it provides management the opportunity to identify and assess capability gaps and therefore guides talent and resource requirement planning, both internal and external to the organisation. In order to maintain a differentiated market position, the nature of luxury retail curatorial roles may need to evolve, requiring a new approach to curation management. The implication for management of a new form of curation management is that a more flexible management style may be required to ensure delivery of a consistent luxury brand experience across the four forms of curation.

For example, the ability of the luxury retailer to bring the brand concept to life will require the recruitment and management of different curatorial talent, such as concept visionaries and experience blueprint designers as brand curators. However, in the context of editorial curation, it will depend on the recruitment and management of editors who are able to curate a unique edit that is perceived to be highly desirable, innovative and covetable, therefore reinforcing the differentiated brand concept and point of view of the luxury retailer. The

curating editor must be creative and innovative, forward-thinking, epitomise the brand and possess excellent taste. In addition, in light of the findings that customers wish to become curators, the editor must also mediate and facilitate individual customer curation across online and physical channels as a cultural intermediary. This suggests that editorial curation may take the form of Brynjolfsson et al's (2013) 'concierge model', geared towards helping consumers, and one that implies that editors, buyers, marketers, stores and online teams will need to be managed differently and become more integrated in order to coordinate key decisions to support and facilitate editorial curation.

Another example of a different type of curation management relates to the management of physical curation. Successful delivery of the curated brand concept depends on the curatorial competencies of the "visual thinkers" in the organisation, who build the invisible thread and visual architecture to support the frame, "poetics" and "politics" of the brand concept. This may mean that luxury retailer managers need to look beyond or develop the skillset of those associated with traditional retail display, for example, established roles such as visual merchandisers and recruit people who understand and can work seamlessly between the different forms of curation. The implication for management is that a new form of curation management style may be required that focuses on integrative and conceptual ways of working in a physical environment.

Relational curation also requires a different type of management style depending on the nature of the luxury retailer. The findings and literature highlight that despite both types of retailers emphasising the importance of strong emotional connections to the customer, the strategic focus differs between the SBLR and the MBLR. This results in a different emphasis on relational curatorial activities and approach to management. With regards to the MBLR, the findings highlight the importance of storytelling to support physical curation and bring the brand concept to life, establish a relationship with the customer and create an opportunity for the customer to participate and co-create the experience. The implication for management is that customer-facing roles, both online and in stores, will need to focus more on becoming mediators of the meaning of the curated brand concept through storytelling, and facilitators of consumer co-creation of experience, rather than just delivering an experience in a brand experience checklist type fashion. The curation management approach required in this context is one that focuses on education and training of customer-facing roles to become mediators and catalysts of experiences. However, in terms of the SBLR, the findings and literature highlight that brand experiences are tightly controlled and managed with customer-facing staff focusing creating a climate of reverence and transmitting core brand messages and the ideology of the artistic director. This level and type of management control differs from the mediation-focus of the MBLR management approach. It also suggests that the degree of customer co-creation of experience will continue to be limited unless the luxury retailer can identify ways in which experiences can also be co-created without management

fearing risk of damaging the core brand identity. This limitation conflicts with the findings that consumers are increasingly seeking opportunities to be creative and one that SBLR management need to consider for future brand experience development.

The final implication for management in relation to curation management is that in light of the need to maintain the differentiation position, investment is required to continually develop curatorial skills to enable the organisation to be innovative. It may also be necessary for management to establish a professional curatorial network outside of the organisation, upon which luxury retail managers can acquire and embed specialised curatorial knowledge and resource within the organisation as flexibly as required. This suggests that for each new brand concept developed, luxury retail managers need to carefully consider the profile and capabilities of the existing or available curatorial professionals and create an appropriate curatorial "dream team" in order to be confident of successful delivery of the luxury brand experience.

The sixth organisational value contribution and implication for management refers to the existence of a geographical hierarchy of curation. In the case of luxury brand retailers who have invested in multiple physical stores, including flagships in capital cities and smaller stores in 2nd or 3rd tier provincial cities, there exists a hierarchy of curation by geography. Flagships receive the main curatorial investment and focus whereas the smaller stores receive a distilled version due to their size and resources. The implication for management is that in order to deliver a seamless, consistent luxury brand experience throughout all types of stores, the interpretation of the curated experience in the flagships must be developed in the smaller stores with consistent production values (even if on a smaller scale) or else there is a risk that the brand may lose credibility and its integrity. Consequently, management must ensure that the roles responsibility for curatorial activities in the smaller stores, such as visual merchandisers and store personnel for the curation of physical display, have full exposure to the flagship curation strategy and are provided with the same curatorial tools to ensure consistent interpretation of, and therefore cohesiveness, in the luxury brand experience.

With regards to the financial value of curation, a curated luxury brand experience engages consumers by offering opportunities to interact with the brand in an entertaining and innovative manner, thereby arousing interest and creating a stronger motivation to visit stores or go online and purchase. The implication for management is that highly covetable, curated edits and unique experiences lead to increased sales and strong brand equity. In order to quantify the impact, a requirement for management is to identify the critical success factors in-store and online and develop a metric and measurement system in order to assess how curation contributes to, and generates revenue.

The final value of curation and management implication to be addressed refers to experiential value. A co-created luxury brand experience increases the emotional connection between the consumer and the brand, resulting in increased brand loyalty. In light of the finding that consumers seek to be the creative and co-create experiences; coupled with the ever-increasing interest in personal curation (supported by the explosion in popularity of social media and apps that encourage the publication and sharing of personal curation, e.g. Pinterest, Instagram, Curator. Co and Cloth), the implication for management is to identify authentic opportunities in which the consumers desire to co-create experiences can be harnessed and fully incorporated into relational curation activities to add value. In addition to developing co-created experiences that build on consumer interests, for example, performativity and personal curation, luxury retailers can also impart greater value by constructing deeper emotional connections with consumers through the development of a stronger, sociological "sense of belonging" and identity formation through an omnichannel curatorial community. Whilst this may be a highly feasible opportunity from a MBLR perspective, the implication for SBLR management is rather more challenging.

Whilst the SBLR flagship remains an important asset, SBLRs can no longer wholly depend on the physical form of the flagship to deliver a holistic brand experience as more customers seek omnichannel experiences. Noted as online "hesitant holdouts" and "selective e-tailers" in the literature[36], the implication for SBLR management is to assess and identify the pathways where brand experiences can be adapted to meet the changing needs of the customer and the wider industry sector, whilst balancing its need for exclusivity, controlled distribution and maintenance of the revered brand image. As presented in the research and literature, even the traditional permanent exhibition format and related curatorial practices that SBLRs emulate and draw on inspiration for their brand experience, are evolving in the face of changing demand and technology. This suggests that the implication for SBLR management is to re-appraise the boundaries of customer co-creation within its model of brand experience in order to maximise the experiential value of curation, develop deeper emotional connections with consumers and sustain its univocal brand position.

In view of the management implications outlined above, and drawing upon the various frameworks presented, a strategic toolkit for curation management in luxury retail has been developed to contribute to luxury retail management practice in the design and development of a curated luxury brand experience:

[36] Duariz et al (2013) Available at: http://www.mckinseyonmarketingandsales.com/sites/default/files/pdf/Digital_Luxury_Experience_2013.pdf (Accessed: 22nd September 2015).

Table 8.8: A Strategic Toolkit for Curation Management in Luxury Retail

<table>
<tr><th>A Strategic Toolkit for Curation Management in Luxury Retail</th><th>Objective</th><th>Management Requirement</th><th>Supporting Toolkit Framework</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="3"></td><td>Design and Development of a Luxury Brand Experience</td><td>Curation Modus Operandi in Luxury Retail</td><td>The Four Forms of Curation Framework
<table>
<tr><td>Identified Curatorial Practices in Luxury Retail</td><td>1
Research</td><td>2
Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts</td><td>3
Acquiring Knowledge</td><td>4
Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View</td><td>5
Art of Display</td><td>6
Storytelling</td><td>7
Experience</td></tr>
<tr><td>Definitions</td><td>Identification of ideas that reinforce the brand identity and vision</td><td>Filtering and Development of Ideas and Concepts to Enhance the Brand Position and Differentiation of the Luxury Retailer</td><td>Seeking and Drawing Upon Knowledge to Strengthen the Idea or Concept e.g. through Collaboration and Partnership</td><td>Selection, Editing, Theme or Concept Platform Building</td><td>Arrangement and Presentation of Products and Design of the Environment Display</td><td>Communication of the Curated Concept Content Through a Story Narrative</td><td>Co-creation of experiences with customers</td></tr>
<tr><td>Form of Curation in Luxury Retail</td><td colspan="3">Brand Curation</td><td>Editorial Curation</td><td>Physical Curation</td><td colspan="2">Relational Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">Design and Development of a Luxury Brand Experience</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Allocation of Curatorial Roles Across the Four Forms of Curation to Deliver the Luxury Brand Experience</td><td>Matrix of Curatorial Roles in Luxury Retail</td><td>The Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix
<table>
<tr><td>Four forms of Curation</td><td colspan="3">Brand Curation</td><td>Editorial Curation</td><td>Physical Curation</td><td colspan="2">Relational Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Type of Luxury Retailer</td><td>Research</td><td>Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts</td><td>Acquiring Knowledge</td><td>Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View</td><td>Art of Display</td><td>Storytelling</td><td>Experience</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">Sole Brand Luxury Retailer Roles</td></tr>
<tr><td>Luxury Corporation</td><td colspan="7">Corporate curatorial role is developing the brand as a cultural institution in its own right (e.g. Joy et al, 2014; Kapferer, 2015)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Artistic Director</td><td colspan="7">Development of a brand ideology that frames the entire brand experience (Dion and Arnould, 2011)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Visual Merchandisers</td><td colspan="4"></td><td>Responsible for product and display curation in accordance to the artistic director's brand direction</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Sales Associates</td><td colspan="5"></td><td>Sales associates</td><td>Sales associates are responsible for transmitting the key brand messages and creating memorable experiences (e.g. Kapferer, 2015; Joy et al, 2014; Dion and Arnould, 2011)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Guest Collaborators</td><td colspan="4"></td><td>Contribute to the curation of products and new physical brand experiences</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="8">Multi Brand Luxury Retailer Roles</td></tr>
<tr><td>CEO</td><td colspan="7">Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Creative Director</td><td colspan="7">Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Director of Visual Identity</td><td colspan="7">Responsible for curating the brand concepts or themes that are distilled throughout the organisation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Buyer</td><td colspan="4"></td><td>Responsible for curating the "edit" as a means of differentiation for the Multi Brand Luxury Retailer</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Editor</td><td colspan="4"></td><td>Responsible for developing narratives to support the communication of the curated edit as a means of differentiation for the Multi Brand Luxury Retailer across all channels</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
<tr><td>Specialist Delivery Teams</td><td colspan="4"></td><td>Responsible for the implementing the brand concept e.g. Graphics team, Window Display, Visual Merchandising, Installation Teams</td><td colspan="2">Sales associates are responsible for the delivery of the curated brand experience and facilitating individual experiences with the brand</td></tr>
<tr><td>Collaborators</td><td></td><td>Contribution to the brand concept</td><td colspan="3"></td><td>Contribution to the physical realisation of the brand concept</td><td colspan="2"></td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
<tr><td>Management and Development of Curatorial Capability</td><td>Curation Management in Luxury Retail</td><td>A Strategic Framework for Curation Management
<table>
<tr><td>Form of Luxury Retail Curation in the Design and Development of Brand Experience</td><td colspan="4">Level of Curation Capability and Management</td></tr>
<tr><td></td><td>Level 1</td><td>Level 2</td><td>Level 3</td><td>Level 4</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Brand Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Research</td><td>Supports the identification of ideas that reinforces the brand identity and vision</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the identification of ideas that reinforces the brand identity and vision</td><td>Leads the identification of ideas that reinforce the brand identity and vision. Responsible for the research and interpretation of brand concepts and ideas across global markets</td><td>Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Filtering and Developing Ideas and Concepts</td><td>Supports the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position. Manages the process of sieving and filtering brand concepts and developing brand concept risk evaluations</td><td>Leads the development of ideas and concepts to enhance the brand position. Responsible for filtering all brand concepts and managing brand risk. Produces the organisational blueprint for implementation across the organisation</td><td>Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation. Responsible for the development of brand concepts across different luxury retail channels and store formats</td></tr>
<tr><td>Acquiring Knowledge</td><td>Supports the acquisition and development of knowledge</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the acquisition and development of knowledge</td><td>Leads the acquisition and development of knowledge. Leads collaboration and partnership strategies for knowledge acquisition</td><td>Responsible for the Brand Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Editorial Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Developing an Edit or Editorial Point of View</td><td>Supports the curation of an "edit" and concept platform building across all channels</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the curation of an "edit" and concept platform building across all channels</td><td>Leads the curation of an "edit" including selection and interpretation and concept platform building across all channels</td><td>Responsible for the Editorial Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Physical Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Art of Display</td><td>Supports the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display</td><td>Leads the arrangement and presentation of products and design of the environment display</td><td>Responsible for the Physical Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Relational Curation</td></tr>
<tr><td>Storytelling</td><td>Supports the development of storytelling</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of storytelling</td><td>Leads the development of storytelling to support the curated brand concept and luxury brand experience</td><td>Responsible for the Relational Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation.</td></tr>
<tr><td>Experience</td><td>Supports the development of co-creation experiences</td><td>Undertakes and manages activities regarding the development of co-creation experiences</td><td>Leads the development of co-creation experiences and development and integration with curatorial consumer communities</td><td>Responsible for the Relational Curation strategy and value generated. Responsible for integration with other forms of curation.</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="5">Note: Level 4 is represented in this example as the highest level of curatorial expertise, competency and skill. It could also, for example, reflect qualification level, managerial responsibility, expected value to be generated or feedback from other managers. In addition, the descriptions for the responsibilities at each level could be tailored with examples of how the roles support each other across the organisation and outline specific curatorial activities and contributions.</td></tr>
</table></td></tr>
</table>

9.4. Limitations of the Research

A number of limitations were identified regarding the size of the sample researched, the chosen research method and data collection process, all of which are now addressed.

This specific topic of research is observed to be a new one in the literature and therefore as an exploratory study, qualitative research has been identified as the most effective means to undercover new themes and learning (Myers, 2013). However, the small number of interviewees, whilst providing rich data, suggest it may be difficult to make broader generalisations from a sample of 17 to a wider population of luxury retailers who may vary in size, structure and strategic focus. This is acknowledged and it is suggested that there is an opportunity for future research focuses on other sub-sets of interviewees, e.g. SBLRs and multi brand luxury online retailers, in order to gain a further insight.

Firstly, whilst the research objective has been to identify and select a broad number of luxury retailers and cultural institution professionals, it is recognised that the type of the cultural institution professionals interviewed are predominantly creative and artistic in their background. It is suggested that these types of curators are a closer and more realistic fit with luxury retail than with curators who are curating scientific subject matter or other disciplines. However, a further consideration is to conduct a broader study consisting of curators drawn from multiple disciplines and beyond the art-historian and creative art-related curators.

Secondly, it is also noted that the sequence of the interviews were mixed due to the time constraints of the interviewees themselves and it was not possible to interview first the cultural institution curators or professionals and then luxury retailers in order to gain an insight into curation and then tailor questions for the luxury retailers. It is therefore suggested that a future study might have stricter time guidelines and sequencing regarding the order of who is interviewed first as this may impact the nature of questioning and identification of answers.

Thirdly, it is noted that the luxury retailers interviewed are those in senior management positions and given that sales associates were identified in sole luxury brand retailing environments as a key curatorial role, it may be suggested that future research may focus on this type of employee more closely in order to fully explore the curatorial nature of the role and gain deeper insight.

A fourth limitation refers to the composition of the luxury retailers, which as more heavily weighted towards multi-luxury brand retailers, with 3 interviewed (Liberty, Matchesfashion.com and Selfridges) and only one sole luxury brand retailer (Louis Vuitton). The objective of the research was to take an open and broad preliminary view, however,

given the nature of the findings, it is suggested that an opportunity for future research is to take a closer examination of both types of luxury retailers both separately and also with a broader, balanced mix.

9.5. Avenues for Future Research

Despite the continued growth of the luxury sector, it is noted in the literature that the management of luxury is "one of the newest chapters in luxury research" (Muller-Stewens and Berghaus, 2014: p. 52). This thesis has identified various contributions to the literature, but also opportunities for further research based on the gaps identified in Chapter 2.4, the findings in Chapters 5-7 and lastly, in Chapter 8 in Tables 8.2, 8.4 and 8.5.

This research and the two identified frameworks are only a first step towards a deeper understanding of the role of curation in the design and development of brand experience in the luxury environment and as a strategic route to competitive advantage and future growth. Further research projects can utilise this research as a starting point upon which to explore other areas and broaden perspectives and knowledge. Examples of potential research areas, both customer and organisation-focused, are highlighted below:

- As a strategic path to future growth, what are the critical success factors that for doing curation well and make curation work in the luxury retail environment? What might be the potential barriers to success or the factors that make curation fail? Do sole and multiple brand luxury retailers face the same challenges or are there specific success factors for each type of luxury brand retailer?

- As luxury customers engage within the curated brand experience they continue to expect derive a set of benefits and receive a form of value. How they derive benefits and value from each of the forms of curation is of interest. Do some forms of the curated experience offer more benefits and value than others? How are the benefits and value framed in the context of the brand concept? How do the benefits and value derived relate to those described in experiential marketing models e.g. Atwal and Williams' (2009) entertainment, educational, aesthetic and escapist zones of experience? How do the derived benefits and value surface in the experiential zones within an omnichannel landscape and how do they differ by luxury retailer type?

- In light of the observed similarities between temporary ideas-led exhibition curation and MBLR curation, it would be helpful to conduct a closer examination of the curatorial skills and competencies that luxury retailer employs and seeks to utilise to create a differentiated brand experience. Do the skills directly translate for the luxury retail environment? Or are they modified or adapted? What skills are not used? Are there any

new types of skills in light of the evolving nature of temporary ideas-led exhibitions and the curatorial focus and responsibility?

- To develop the Luxury Retail Curatorial Matrix and the Strategic Framework of Luxury Retail Curation Management further into a competency framework by adopting a case study approach and examining curatorial activities across organisations in more depth. This would help to address the issues of confusion regarding multiple role titles and classify the roles by detailed descriptions of competencies within each of the four forms of curation. It is suggested that development of a competency framework would support both types of luxury retail managers from a resource planning perspective, highlight where strengths and weaknesses lie in the context of developing seamless brand experiences, and be a first step towards acknowledgement in the literature and industry that luxury retail curation is a professional competency or discipline in its own right.

- To examine the Four Forms of Curation and Luxury Retail Curatorial Role Matrix frameworks specifically in the case of well-established online and emerging omnichannel luxury retailers to identify the learning curve for MBLRs and SBLRs. For example, how does Editorial Curation manifest itself in online only luxury retailers e.g. Net-a-Porter.com compared to omnichannel MBLR retailers such as Selfridges and Matchesfashion.com and SBLRs like Burberry? Similarly, how does Relational Curation manifest itself in online only vis-à-vis omnichannel luxury retail brand experiences? What are the key curatorial roles in online Relational Curation? In addition, are there examples of best practice Relational Curation online and omnichannel outside of luxury retail, e.g. the luxury travel sector that can contribute to the body of knowledge?

- To explore in greater depth the similarities identified between the Four Forms of Curation and Roppola's (2014) Relational Model and identify to what extent, and how, the Framing, Channeling, Resonating and Broadening constructs apply within the luxury retail environment. What kind of frames can support luxury retailer expansion into omnichannel retailing? What level of customer intimacy can be developed by curating customised and resonant online environments? How do different omnichannel experiences broaden customers' self-identity and provide value to the customer? Can the quality of curated experience decisions be evaluated by these constructs?

To conclude, whilst these avenues for new research in the realms of luxury retail curation are not exhaustive, they highlight that there is considerable scope to utilise the two working frameworks developed in this research as a first step to expanding knowledge concerning luxury retail curation and luxury brand experience. It is hoped that further exploration will acknowledge and support the evolution of luxury retail curation from its traditional art-historian origins into a formally recognised discipline of curation in its own right.

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11. Appendices

Appendix 1. Examples of Online Luxury Retailer Brand and Marketing Communications featuring the Term “Curated”

Appendix 2. Overview of ABI/INFORM and EBSCO References in the Literature Regarding Curation of Brand Experience in Luxury Retail

Appendix 3. Description of the Organisations in the Sample Population

Appendix 4. Example of a Transcript

Appendix 5. Summary of the Seven Curatorial Activities in the Luxury Retail Environment

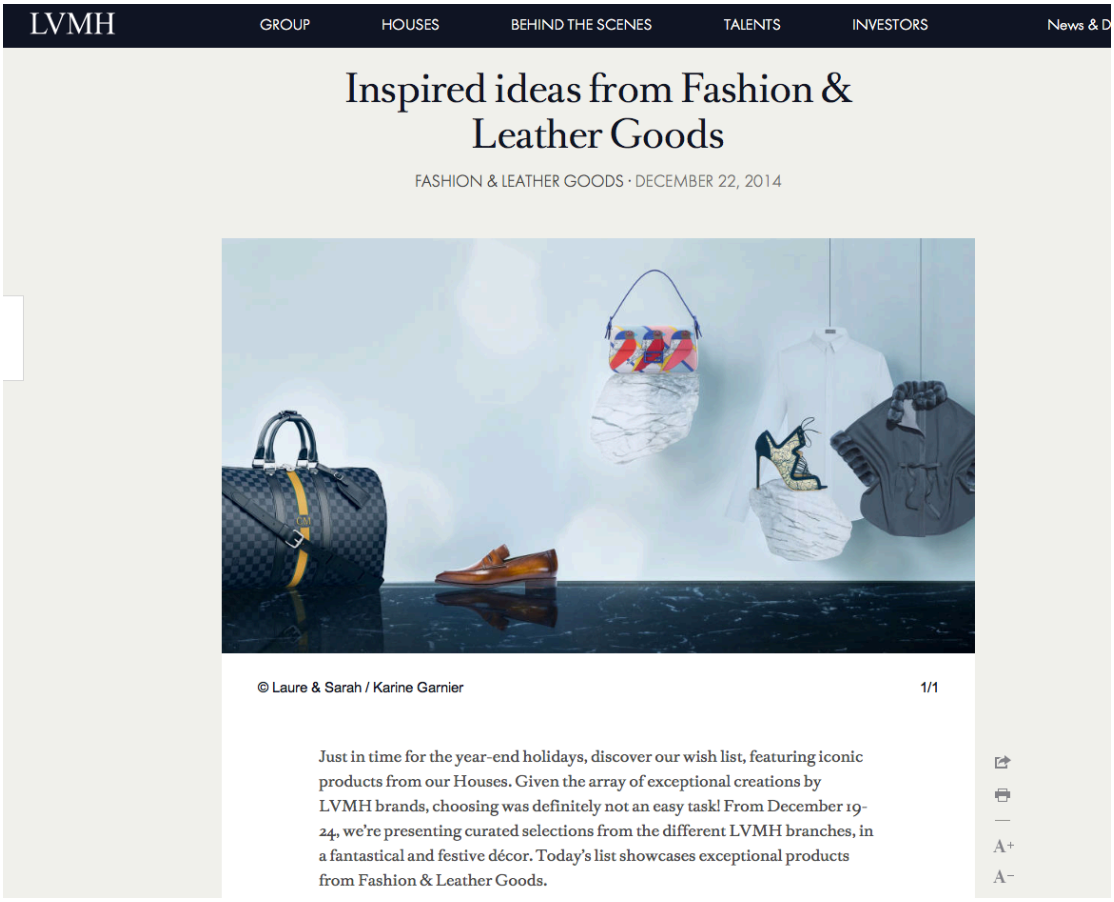
Appendix 1: Examples of Online Luxury Retailer Brand and Marketing Communications featuring the Term "Curated"

1. LVMH

http://www.lvmh.com/news-documents/news/inspired-ideas-from-fashion-leather-goods-2/

"From December 19-24, we're presenting curated selections"

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

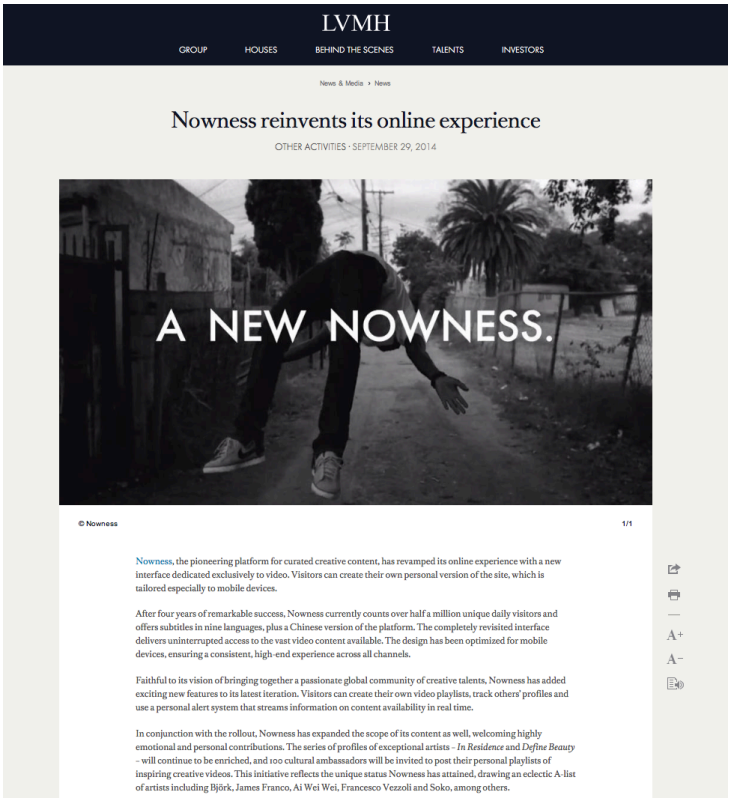


2. LVMH-owned Online Curation

http://www.lvmh.com/news-documents/news/nowness-reinvents-its-online-experience/

“the pioneering platform for curated creative content”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16



LVMH

GROUP HOUSES BEHIND THE SCENES TALENTS INVESTORS

News & Media › News

Nowness reinvents its online experience

OTHER ACTIVITIES · SEPTEMBER 29, 2014

© Nowness 1/1

Nowness, the pioneering platform for curated creative content, has revamped its online experience with a new interface dedicated exclusively to video. Visitors can create their own personal version of the site, which is tailored especially to mobile devices.

After four years of remarkable success, Nowness currently counts over half a million unique daily visitors and offers subtitles in nine languages, plus a Chinese version of the platform. The completely revisited interface delivers uninterrupted access to the vast video content available. The design has been optimized for mobile devices, ensuring a consistent, high-end experience across all channels.

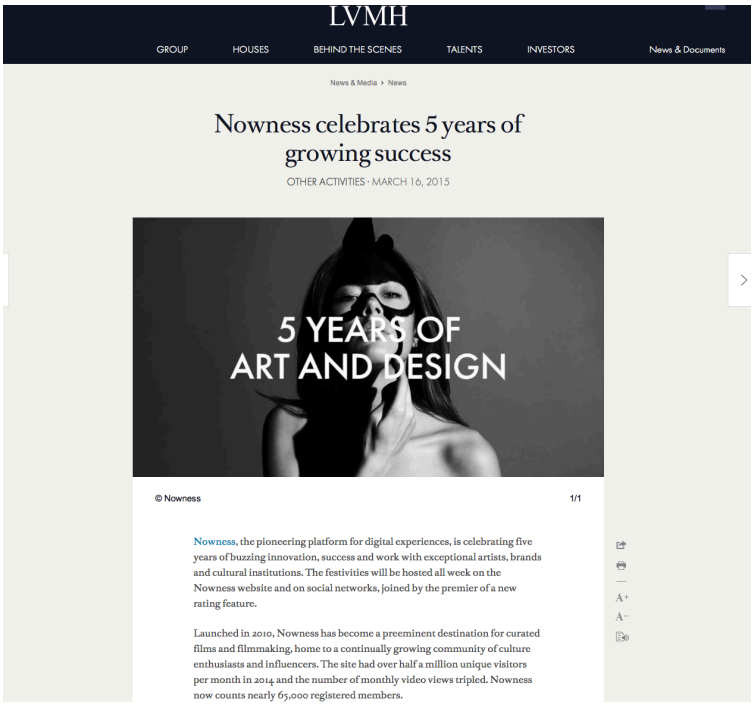
Faithful to its vision of bringing together a passionate global community of creative talents, Nowness has added exciting new features to its latest iteration. Visitors can create their own video playlists, track others' profiles and use a personal alert system that streams information on content availability in real time.

In conjunction with the rollout, Nowness has expanded the scope of its content as well, welcoming highly emotional and personal contributions. The series of profiles of exceptional artists - *In Residence* and *Define Beauty* - will continue to be enriched, and 100 cultural ambassadors will be invited to post their personal playlists of inspiring creative videos. This initiative reflects the unique status Nowness has attained, drawing an eclectic A-list of artists including Björk, James Franco, Ai Wei Wei, Francesco Vezzoli and Soko, among others.

http://www.lvmh.com/news-documents/news/nowness-celebrates-5-years-of-growing-success-3/

“A preeminent destination for curated films and filmmaking”

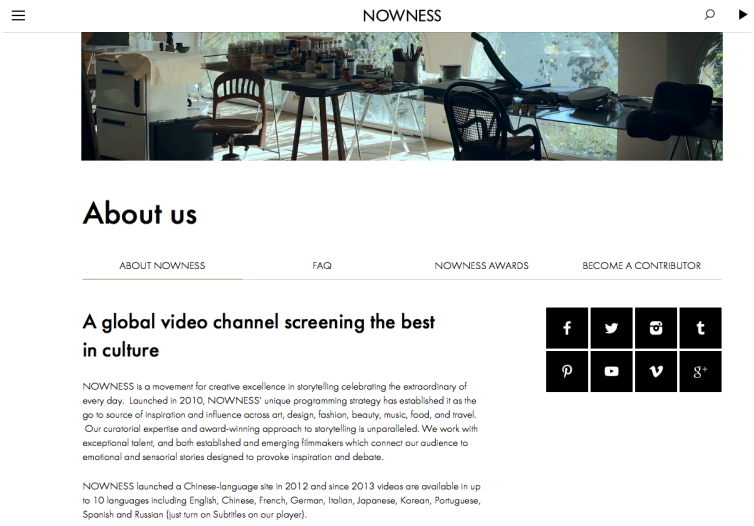
Last Accessed: 23.1.16



https://www.nowness.com/about

“the go to source of inspiration and influence across art, design, fashion, beauty, music, food, and travel”

“Our curatorial expertise and award-winning approach to storytelling is unparalleled.”



3. Example Press Coverage of the "Curated Shelves" Project – Louis Vuitton, New Bond Street

The Telegraph, Luxury

http://www.telegraph.co.uk/luxury/art/44214/louis-vuitton-the-curated-shelf.html

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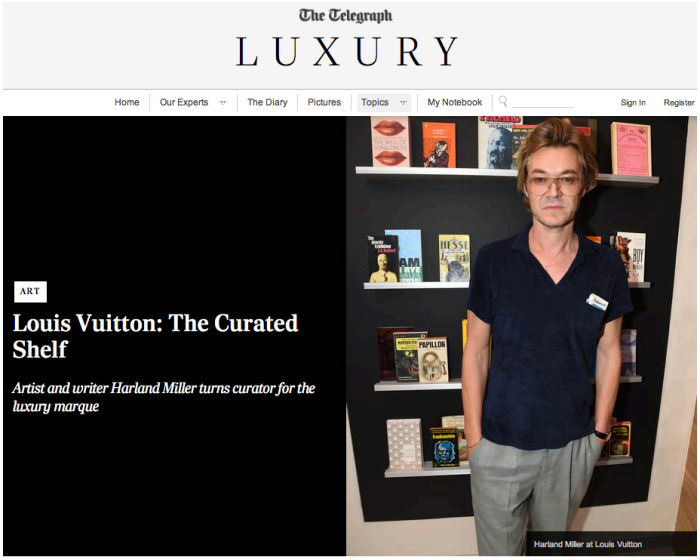
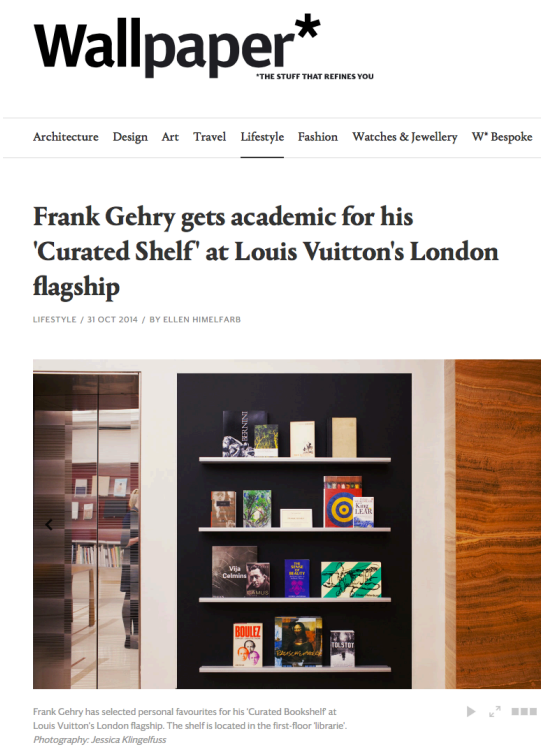


Wallpaper

http://www.wallpaper.com/lifestyle/frank-gehry-gets-academic-for-his-curated-shelf-at-louis-vuittons-london-flagship

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

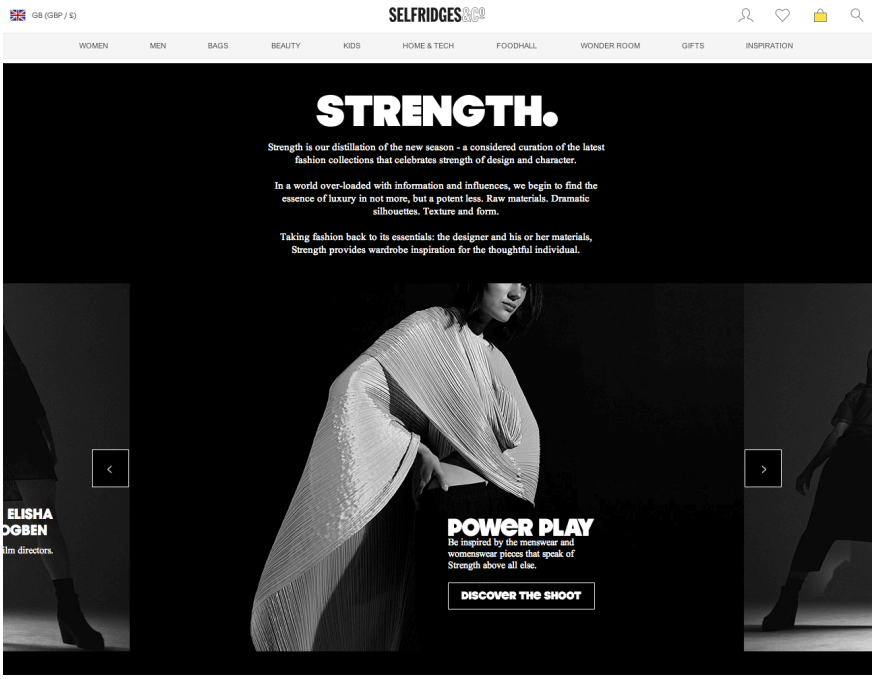


4. Selfridges

http://www.selfridges.com/GB/en/content/strength

“Strength is our distillation of the new season – a considered curation of the latest fashion collections that celebrates strength of design and character”

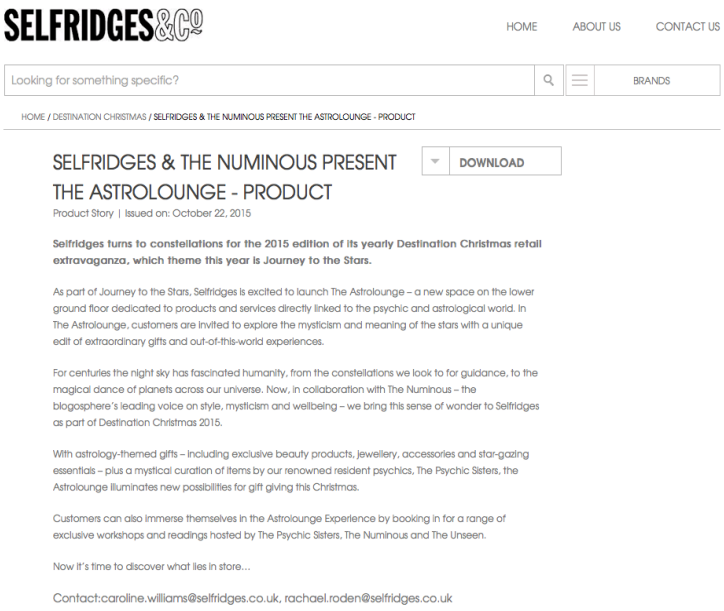
Last Accessed: 23.1.16



http://press.selfridges.com/story/selfridges-numinous-present-astrolounge-product

“a mystical curation of items”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

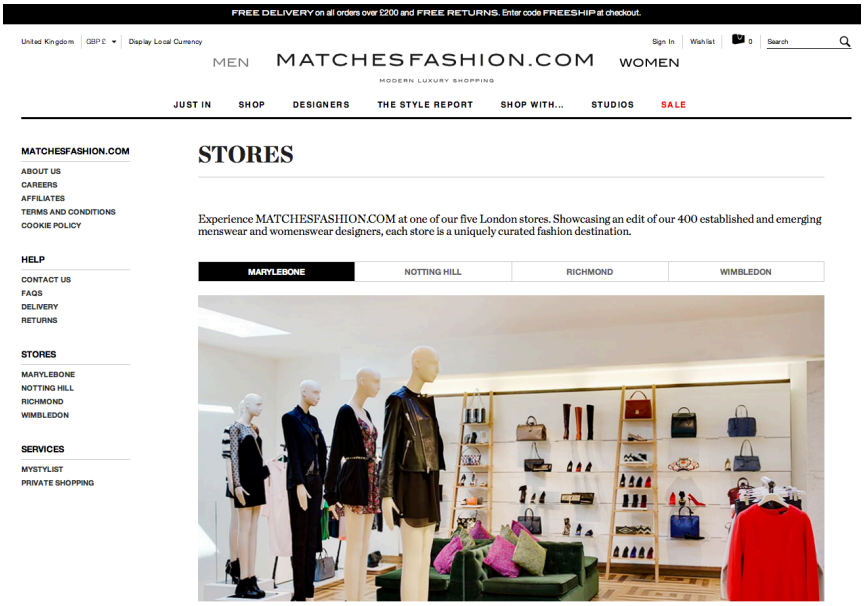


5. Matchesfashion.com

http://www.matchesfashion.com/stores/marylebone

“Uniquely curated fashion destination”

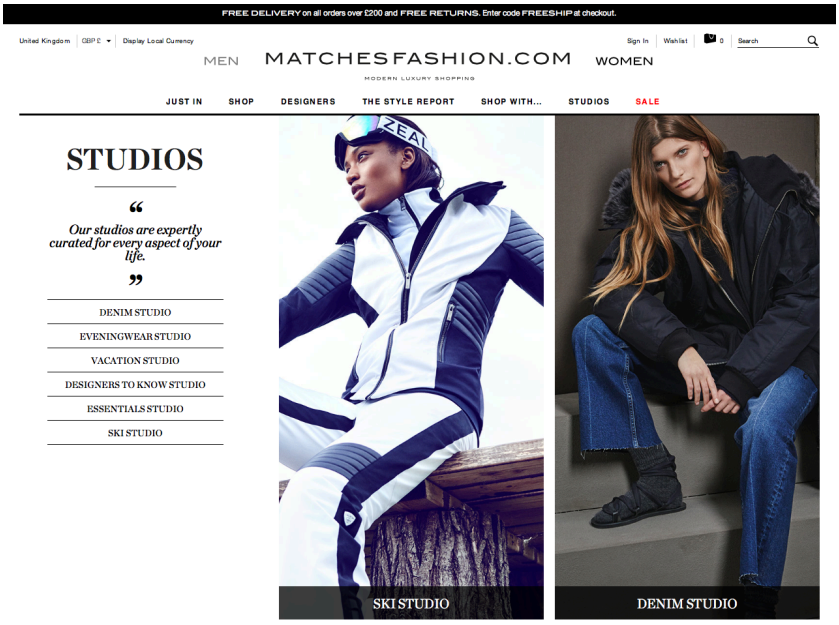
Last Accessed: 23.1.16



http://www.matchesfashion.com/womens/studios-landing

“Our studios are expertly curated for every aspect of your life”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

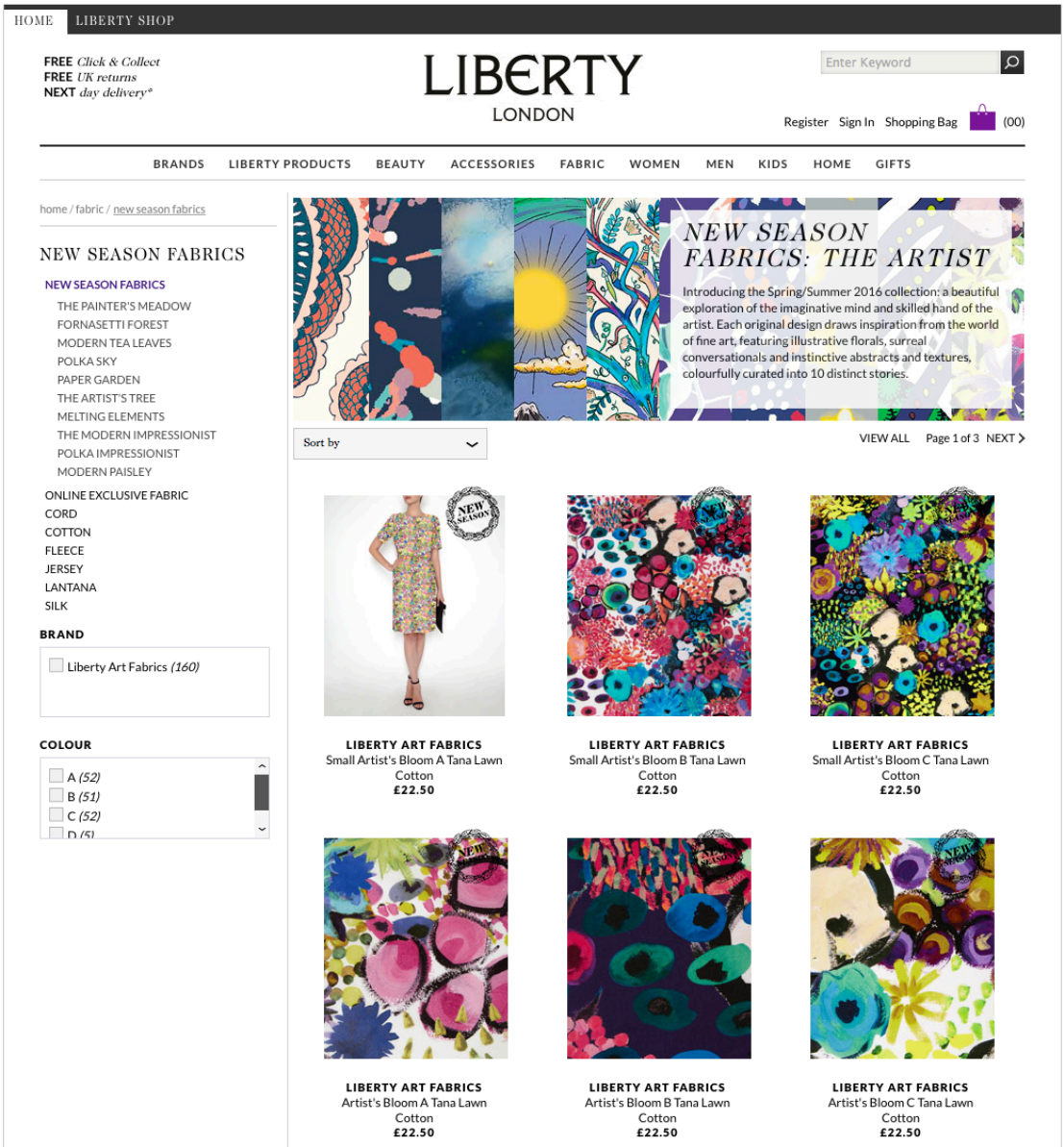


6. Liberty

http://www.liberty.co.uk/fcp/categorylist/dept/fabrics_new-season

“Each original design draws inspiration from the world of fine art, featuring illustrative florals, surreal conversationals and instinctive abstracts and textures, colourfully curated into 10 distinct stories”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16



7. Further Examples of the Use of the Term “Curated” in the Luxury Retailer Context

10 Corso Como

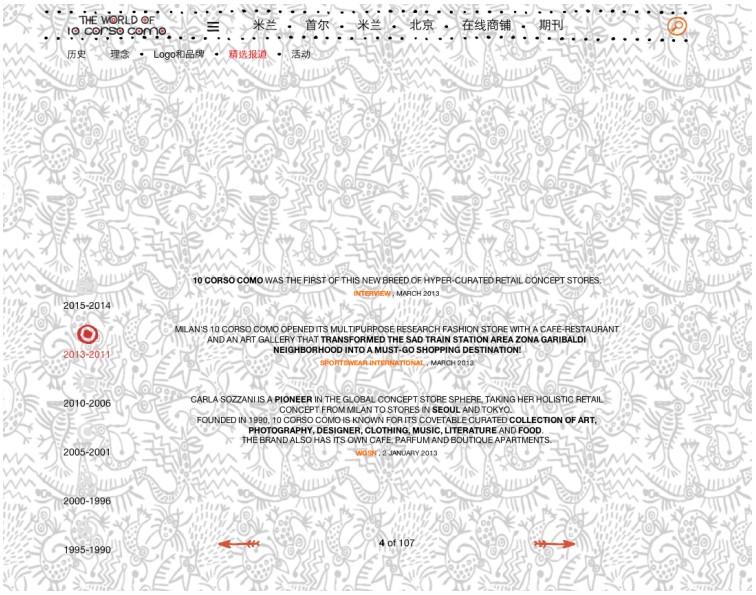
http://www.10corsocomo.com/visit/?pageID=press_2013_2011&lang=ch

Press Reviews:

“10 Corso Como was the first of this new breed of hyper-curated retail concept stores” Interview, March 2013

“10 Corso Como is known for its covetable curated collection of art, photography, designer, clothing, music, literature and food”, WGSN, 2013

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

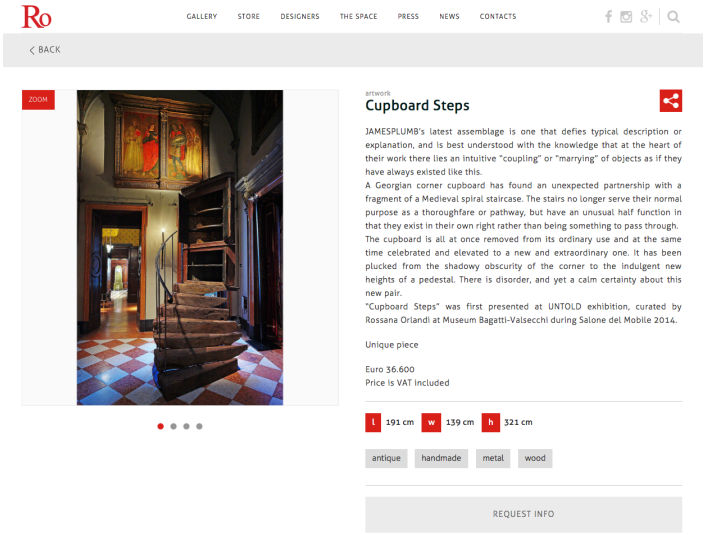


Rossana Orlandi

http://rossanaorlandi.com/product/cupboard-steps/

“Cupboard Steps was first presented at UNTOLD exhibition, curated by Rossana Orlandi”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16

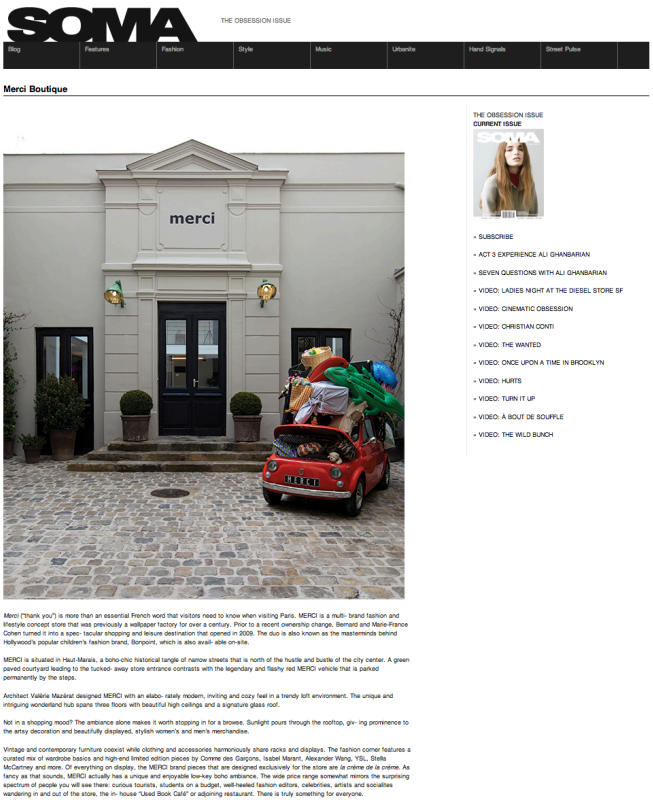


Merci

http://www.somamagazine.com/merci-boutique/

“The fashion corner features a curated mix”

Last Accessed: 23.1.16



SOMA

THE OBSESSION ISSUE

Blog | Features | Fashion | Style | Music | Urbanite | Hand Signals | Street Pulse

Merci Boutique

Merci (“thank you”) is more than an essential French word that visitors need to know when visiting Paris. MERCI is a multi- brand fashion and lifestyle concept store that was previously a wallpaper factory for over a century. Prior to a recent ownership change, Bernard and Marie-France Cohen turned it into a spec- tacular shopping and leisure destination that opened in 2009. The duo is also known as the masterminds behind Hollywood’s popular children’s fashion brand, Bonpoint, which is also avail- able on-site.

MERCI is situated in Haut-Marais, a boho-chic historical tangle of narrow streets that is north of the hustle and bustle of the city center. A green paved courtyard leading to the tucked- away store entrance contrasts with the legendary and flashy red MERCI vehicle that is parked permanently by the steps.

Architect Valérie Mazérat designed MERCI with an elabo- rately modern, inviting and cozy feel in a trendy loft environment. The unique and intriguing wonderland hub spans three floors with beautiful high ceilings and a signature glass roof.

Not in a shopping mood? The ambiance alone makes it worth stopping in for a browse. Sunlight pours through the rooftop, giv- ing prominence to the artsy decoration and beautifully displayed, stylish women’s and men’s merchandise.

Vintage and contemporary furniture coexist while clothing and accessories harmoniously share racks and displays. The fashion corner features a curated mix of wardrobe basics and high-end limited edition pieces by Comme des Garçons, Isabel Marant, Alexander Wang, YSL, Stella McCartney and more. Of everything on display, the MERCI brand pieces that are designed exclusively for the store are *la crème de la crème*. As fancy as that sounds, MERCI actually has a unique and enjoyable low-key boho ambiance. The wide price range somewhat mirrors the surprising spectrum of people you will see there: curious tourists, students on a budget, well-heeled fashion editors, celebrities, artists and socialites wandering in and out of the store, the in- house “Used Book Café” or adjoining restaurant. There is truly something for everyone.

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Appendix 2: Overview of ABI Inform and EBSCO References in the Literature Regarding Curation of Brand Experience in Luxury Retail (accessed 29.9.15)

Terms Searched	EBSCO	ABI/INFORM	Comments
Curation	323	485	EBSCO references relate to digital curation and online content. ABI/INFORM references relate to digital curation, data curation and library curation
Curator	2138	2583	EBSCO and ABI/INFORM references both relate to museum curators and digital curators
Curation and Luxury	0	7	ABI/INNFORM references include Joy et al (2014) and digital curation
Curated Experience	0	382	ABI/INFORM references relate to digital and museum curation
Role of the Curator in Brand Experience	1	212	Museum and travel references Joy et al (2014) referenced regarding luxury retail
Brand Experience Curation	27	43	Digital content references
Curated Brand Experience	1	80	EBSCO reference referred to a specialist coffee retailer. ABI/INFORM references related to digital curation
Curated Luxury Brand Experience	41	12	Social media and hospitality references
Curation in Luxury Retail	9	3	Joy et al (2014), Social media related and Library World referenced only
Luxury Retail Curation	27	3	As above
Luxury Retail Curator	9	65	EBSCO references are trade publications that are all referenced in this thesis. ABI/INFORM references relate to digital curation references with only Joy et al (2014) referenced

Appendix 3: Description of the Organisations in the Sample

Luxury Retailers

Liberty

The longevity of the specialised luxury department store (139 years) combined with continued excellent ranking as one of the top luxury retail stores in London and the UK, provides an argument that it would be highly appropriate to include in the research.[37] Its ability to continuously reinvent itself as a fundamental arts and craft retailer, yet retain an exclusive taste level for wider luxury lifestyle product categories and offer genuinely personalised brand experiences, is the rationale for inclusion as one of the case studies. Participants include the Director of Visual Identity, who is responsible for brand concepts and the visual brand experience throughout the entire store; a Designer for Liberty London, who is establishing a new brand and brand experience; and the Director of Buying and Merchandising for Liberty, which encompasses the selection and edit of all collections.

Matchesfashion.com

The rationale for selecting Matches Fashion is that over the past 26 years it has grown as a leading contemporary multi-brand luxury on and offline retailer to dominate luxury retail both in the UK and on a global level online, representing a fully-established omni-channel luxury retailer. The company has expanded to stocking more than 400 brands, shipping to more than 200 countries and hitting 15 million page views on the website per month (Zhang, 2013). 70% of the product line is online and in 2013 the organisation changed its store brand to matchesfashion.com, an indication of its strategic mission to build a highly synergized online/bricks-and-mortar luxury retail experience (Zhang, 2013). The focus on the creation and delivery of a highly personalised boutique physical brand experience and a dynamic online curation of luxury multi-brands online is an innovative strategy that fits the nature of this research enquiry. The interview participant selected is the Director of Brand Communications, responsible for all brand-related communications and strategy.

Selfridges

Selfridges has been rated the number one luxury department store in the world by the Global Department Store Summit in 2010, 2012 and 2014.[38] The Selfridges brand has grown

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[37] Time Out Best Shops in London ranking include Liberty and Selfridges as number 1 and 2 spots over the past ten years. Source: http://www.timeout.com/london/shopping/the-100-best-shops-in-london-by-type-one-stop-shop (Accessed 21.9.15)

[38] Source: http://www.dssummit2014.org/en_award.cfm (Accessed 21.9.15) The Best Department Store in the World is awarded to a world class performer and innovator based on the following criteria: 1. An enviable profile (clear store brand, differentiated positioning, omni-channel strategy, powerful messaging and communications; 2. Successful developments and executions of product, store,

nationally with two luxury department stores in Manchester, one in Birmingham and the original and flagship store in London. It is renowned for its innovative brand experience concepts throughout the store, its emphasis for visual display and installations with famous collaborators and huge collection of luxury multi-brands e.g. the world's largest luxury shoe department. The participant is the Senior Manager for Research and Innovation, who is the direct report to the Creative Director.

Louis Vuitton

Established in 1854 in France, Louis Vuitton is the world's 14th most valuable luxury brand with profit margins approximately 40% and global sales of $10.billion and a brand value with an estimated worth of $28.1billion.[39] Louis Vuitton products include leather accessories, handbags, jewellery and ready to wear and most carry the Louis Vuitton monogram. The luxury brand utilizes four distribution channels of 450 monobrand stores, duty-free shops, department stores and online (e.g. Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Globe and Mail Report; Louis Vuitton Annual Report 2015).[40] The interview participant is the store manager of the latest Louis Vuitton outlet in London, located inside Dover Street Market, a world famous luxury concept store.

Cultural Institutions/Centres

British Museum

At over 250 years old, the British Museum is a global icon, the number one visited museum in the UK and number three globally (Association of Leading Visitor Attractions, www.alva.org.uk, The Art Newspaper, April 2013). Aside from an outstanding global reputation, the museum has embraced a new and innovative attitude towards visitor experience as evidenced by the substantial interior remodeling by Sir Norman Foster of the "Great Court" which gives a sense of order and clarity (Sweet, 2011; Barreneche, 2005). In addition, the British Museum has transformed its retail operations around the visitor experience (Sweet, 2011). The interview participant is the Director of Retail in the British Museum and selected for his close work and collaboration with all curators in the museum on every exhibition.

Barbican

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online and service innovation strategies; 3. Delivery of an outstanding in-store experience, 4. Provision of excellent customer service, 5. Strong financial performance based on SSS and EBIT growth and positive trend results over the previous two years and in the outlook for the next year)

[39] Source: http://www.forbes.com/companies/louis-vuitton/ (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[40] Source: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/report-on-business/international-business/european-business/louis-vuitton-slows-expansion-to-protect-image/article8069266/ (Accessed: 21.9.15)

The Barbican is Europe's largest multi-arts venue presenting a wide range of art, music, theatre, dance, film and creative learning events and exhibitions, and also home to the London Symphony Orchestra. Over 1.8m visitors visit the Barbican for its wide and diverse range of exhibitions and events annually.[41] The interviewee was selected as a senior curator working at the Barbican and has also worked extensively with luxury retailers on many collaborative projects.

Victoria & Albert Museum

The rationale for selecting a participant who was a senior director at the V&A museum relates to it not only as a leading global museum in art and design but also due to the fact that it has undergone a dramatic programme, "FuturePlan", involving a significant renewal and restoration plan over the past 10 years. The participant played an integral part in the transformation of the museum to being artifact-focused to experience-focused in the Future Plan.

Somerset House

Somerset House is a major arts and cultural centre in the heart of London that hosts programmes of contemporary art and design exhibitions, free displays, family workshops and guided tours.[42] It presents a programme of visual art exhibitions, installations, performances and events, as well as developing and commissioning its own strand of artistic and cultural output through collaborations with world-class institutions to bring important work to London. As well as playing host to The Courtauld, the key focus is on learning with temporary exhibitions in the Embankment Galleries, which focus on contemporary fashion, architecture, photography and design. In addition, in 2010 it established *Pick Me Up*, the UK's first contemporary graphic arts fair. The interview participant selected was the Director of Exhibitions and Learning who has worked both in a curatorial capacity in the Victoria & Albert Museum as well as with luxury retailers on multiple collaborations as part of her own independent brand experience consultancy.

Studio Voltaire and House of Voltaire

Studio Voltaire was initiated in 1994 by a collective of twelve artists who set up a studio space in a disused tram shed on Voltaire Road, Clapham.[43] It currently houses over 45 London based artists, ranging from internationally recognised practitioners to recent graduates and includes two groups supporting artists with learning difficulties. It has also hosted a number of residencies for national and international artists; partners have included Berlin Senate, Collective Gallery, British Council, Outset and Royal College of Art. Through an ambitious public programme of exhibitions, it provides artists their first solo exhibition in London by

[41] Source: http://www.barbican.org.uk/about-barbican (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[42] Source: http://www.somersethouse.org.uk/about (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[43] Source: http://www.studiovoltaire.org/about-us/history/ (Accessed: 21.9.15)

commissioning new projects that may not always be possible within institutional or commercial frameworks. The programme is intergenerational, supporting emerging and underrepresented practices and allowing artists to develop new work on their own terms. The interviewee selected is the Director of Studio Voltaire, who is also the Director of the House of Voltaire, a luxury store that sells artistic and creative works that the artists have produced in collaboration or association with exhibitions.

Mario Testino

Mario Testino OBE is widely regarded as one of the most influential fashion and portrait photographers with his photographs published globally and creating emblematic images for brands from Gucci, Burberry, Versace and Michael Kors to Chanel, Estée Lauder and Lancôme over the past 35 years. In addition, Testino has realised a body of work as a creative director, guest editor, museum founder, art collector/collaborator and entrepreneur leading to 2007, at the request of his clients to provide full creative direction services, the formation of MARIOTESTINO+ which focuses on creative and artistic collaborations with luxury brands.[44] The interview participant selected is the Creative Director and Director of Creative Enterprises, who also has extensive experience in luxury retail having previously been the Creative Director at Wedgwood, Group Style Director at Conran and led numerous collaborations with cultural institutions such as the Victoria & Albert Museum and the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York.

Richard Saltoun Gallery

Richard Saltoun is a London-based gallery specializing in post-war art with a particular interest and emphasis on conceptual, feminist and performance artists that emerged during the 1970s.[45] The gallery has been at the forefront of reintroducing and promoting the work of exceptional artists from the 1970s such as Helen Chadwick, Bob Law, and Jo Spence, all of whom used their art to express and reflect the social turbulence of the times. Until relatively recently, many of these innovative and experimental artists were largely ignored by collectors and museums. Through exhibiting the work of these artists and many others, Richard Saltoun gallery has provided a unique and often unexpected perspective on contemporary art history. The interview participant selected is a curator at the gallery.

[44] Source: http://www.mariotestino.com/biography/ (Accessed 21.9.15)

[45] Source: http://www.richardsaltoun.com/contact-us/ (Accessed 21.9.15)

The Royal Collection/Purdey Hicks

The interview participant was employed as a curator at both the Royal Collection and also at Purdey Hicks and is now a freelance curator for multiple different cultural and heritage institutions. Established in 1987, Royal Collection Trust is a department of the Royal Household and the only one that undertakes its activities without recourse to public funds.[46] It is responsible for the care of the Royal Collection and has the following charitable aims. During 2013-14 Royal Collection Trust accomplished the following: 2.7 million visitors to the Palaces and Galleries; 38,000 schoolchildren visited Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and the Palace of Holyroodhouse; 18,800 visitors to two loan exhibitions in the UK; 256 works lent to 46 exhibitions in the UK and seven other countries, more than 235,000 records of works of art published online, 1,126 conservation treatments carried out.[47] Regarding Purdey Hicks, this is a gallery that exhibits and deals with Contemporary British and Irish painting and photography alongside international artists.

Photomonitor

Photomonitor is an online specialist curatorial magazine focusing on photography and lens-based media in the UK and Ireland that helps to promote engaging thought on artists' work in more than 120 countries around the world. Exhibition and book reviews, gallery listings, interviews, essays and online exhibitions are with leading members of the art and photography community regarding works that demand investigation.[48] The interview participant is the founder and Editor of Photomonitor and who has also worked as a curator at the James Hyman gallery and holds an MA from Sothebys and MBA from Columbia.

Design Museum

The Design Museum in London claims to be the world's leading museum devoted to contemporary design in every form from architecture and fashion to graphics, product and industrial design.[49] The interview participant was selected due to previous experience working with the curatorial team, which focuses on the curation of future designs as opposed to preservation of historical artefacts.

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[46] Source: http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/about (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[47] Source: http://www.royalcollection.org.uk/about (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[48] Source: http://www.photomonitor.co.uk/about-us/photomonitor/ (Accessed: 21.9.15)

[49] Source: https://designmuseum.org/about-the-museum (Accessed: 21.9.15)

Exhibition and Visitor Experience Consultancy

Metaphor

Metaphor has worked in the cultural sector on a global scale, rethinking and replanning museums, redisplaying exhibitions, and turning historic landscapes and city quarters into successful visitor destinations based on interpretation and design expertise, acting as a bridge between curators and Metaphor designers.[50] The consultancy delivers visioning, masterplanning, architecture, design, story-planning, text writing, content research, financial sustainability, brief writing, facilitating workshops, consultation and working with funders. Clients include the British Museum, Victoria & Albert Museum, the Ashmolean Museum, Grand Egyptian Museum in Cairo, the Imperial War Museum, Kew Palace, Marks and Spencer, National Trust, Olympic Museum, Salford Museum and Art Gallery, the Science Museum, Somerset House, National Art Gallery Singapore, National Museum of Scotland and the Guggenheim Bilbao. The interview participant is the founder and Director of Metaphor.

[50] Source: http://www.metaphor.eu/about-us/

Appendix 4: Example of a Transcript

FILE DETAILS

Audio Length: 61 minutes
Number of Facilitators: One
Number of Interviewees: One
Difficult Interviewee: Accents: ☐ *Yes* ☒ *No*
Word Count: 7279
Participant: 6. C3
Date: 17th July 2014 0933

Q1. Curation

Facilitator:
The first thing I'd like to talk about is how do you define curation and your role as a curator today?

Interviewee:
My role specifically?

Facilitator:
Yeah.

Interviewee:
Yes, it's an interesting one isn't it now that – I'll talk broadly as well because it has become a hot word. You curate your own dinner party. You do anything you like. You curate your wedding. Which, I suppose, implies a lot of truths actually that what you're doing is assembling things to tell a story, to illuminate a subject, to find something interesting to say about a collection of things or ideas that you feel – in acting as a curator, that you feel are interesting and warrants attention or a new scholarship work, a fresh perspective. Particularly in the context of making temporary exhibitions it's what I aim to do especially when you're dealing with historic subject matter. Working in a curatorial way with living artists or a practitioner of a different variety is slightly different, you're maybe being a bit more of a facilitator enabling them to make work in the way that they want to make work and to be able to – a stage and give them space to do what they need to do.
If you're talking about the role of the curator in a more traditional conventional museum, you become a custodian of a set of objects, you feed into policy of strategy about collecting in the contemporary sense and how that fits with the collecting policy of the museum previously. You are some sort of scholar of those artefacts. Then it's likely that you will, on occasion, make displays or exhibitions including those artefacts or around the period or around the

subject of that particular collection. That's a very different role to the one I play, in that I very often have a broad spectrum of knowledge over a set of different disciplines over a fairly expansive time period. When I'm making show – the Bauhaus show that I did here a few years ago for example – you have to turn your attention to a period of history that you're familiar with but you have to become reasonably scholarly. Then how you tell a story about the subject that you're focusing on is the guiding principle.
You may also have to know who are the scholars within that field, who are the specialists and work with them very closely.
Your – we don't have a collection, it's a [unclear] situation so you're also – part of your job is to go and identify loans and have sensitive negotiations with lenders about borrowing their very precious objects.
What we try to do here at the Barbican is always take a new perspective on a subject matter. We're quite interested in cross-disciplinary opportunities so bringing works of a certain field into conversation and dialogue with another art form for example, which is often a much truer reflection of how people work. People don't work in silos in the way that some institutions work.
It's quite – especially now in the late 20th century and 21st century situation, communications are unparalleled in the – how we can reach one another and how fast information moves around the planet. That means that – and what technology enables us to do on a practical level is changing how we all operate and how we think.
It makes one reflect back on history differently and enables you to look into – I'm doing a show at the moment about the work of Charles and Ray Eames which will be open at the end of next year. They were working a lot in the communications field, a very – a vanguard of a changing moment in the early 1950s. Talking a lot about applying computer technology to the processes of architecture and urban planning and things like that which people aren't very familiar with.
It's quite interesting to be able to reveal parts of people's practice that aren't broadly understood or broadly appreciated outside of academic circles but also then use that – those moments in history to reflect on where we are now and plotting those historic trajectories to the contemporary.

Facilitator:
So in a curatorial capacity, are you different to a traditional museum curator?

Interviewee:
Yes and no, the whole – the landscape of museums is extremely broad as well, museums that are historic houses, you can have museums like the V&A and they do everything from small displays to big temporary exhibitions to collecting, to research, to conservation, innovations. It's incredibly – it's hard to talk about it as a singular thing I think because the situations of different institutions are so varied.

Facilitator:
For you are there any – if you were to hang it on something and say a few words to describe whether it's research, exploration, new perspective. As a curator, what would you say that the key characteristics are that would describe your role in the context of your environment, which is more exhibition-focused?

Interviewee:
Yeah. It's supposed to be about research. It's about, for me particularly as an exhibition maker, it's about staging and it's about crafting a narrative that communicates, I suppose it's about researching, editing and communicating if you want to reduce it.

Q2. Brand Experience

Facilitator:
Fantastic. Thank you. Another area I'd like to explore with you is regarding experience. Do you consider or think that you impact or influence the design and also the development of client or visitor experience for the Barbican? If you think of the Barbican as a brand and the experience that people have interacting with that brand at the Barbican? As a curator do you think you have any impact or influence on that?

Interviewee:
Yes. Sure. It's very much on part of one's long term planning discussions, what you want people to think about the Barbican, ways in which you – when we're thinking about how to programme and planning for our shows. You don't necessarily sit there and think is this very Barbican but you – there is an attitude of the centre definitely which is reflected in its brand principles I suppose or where it sees itself or how it would like to be seen. That is important particularly in a city like London where it's deeply competitive culturally. You have to recognise what it is about an organisation that makes it different and gives it an advantage and what it is that we think our audiences want.

Facilitator:
Is there a brand mission or objectives around the Barbican. Do you have something quite clear that everyone's aware of and you work towards that influences the Barbican visitor experience? Is it clear who the target market is for the Barbican?

Interviewee:
It's very – it's huge. We can have target markets for an exhibition but they're not the same necessarily all the time. They're not necessarily the same as the centre broadly. We've a very prestigious classical music programme and free contemporary art space, a commercial

cinema with an art house hat that they're already bringing massively different audiences.

Facilitator:
But is it very segmented?

Interviewee:
Yeah, but I think the desire is to cross pollinate, to try and get people who conventionally maybe only come here to see classical or listen to classical music, to get them to dip their toe into other forms of programme. There is also a tremendous amount of outreach work that happens to try and reach audiences that don't come here or feel like they don't – aren't allowed to come here particularly from local deprived communities, I would say, to use a language that I don't necessarily like but it's probably the most useful.
To try and – young people particularly, young people who don't necessarily have – come from a background which privileges art in the broadest sense. There's a lot of stuff happening in the centre and outside of the centre in order to try and bring people in and make them feel like the Barbican is for them and is not literally a Barbican in that sense.

Facilitator:
When you're thinking about the brand and brand experience who do you work with? Is there, for example, a core team that you would work with?

Interviewee:
We have dedicated visual arts media relations people and marketing people. Then we also work with the head of marketing and head of communications on a bigger strategic level. Our artistic director and director of audiences who's one of [unclear] communication, is that the title, I can't remember, he's got some crazy long title. You feed in at all sorts of different levels. On the level of an exhibition you'll be talking to Comms in that overarching way. Yesterday for example, we have a strategy meeting about our Autumn Press launch about our 2015 programme. You're starting to talk about titles of shows and what that means and how that can be communicated, accessibility and so on and so forth. There's a lot of – while you don't sit there and talk about brand in a very overt way it's implicit.
Today I'll be in a meeting about our new membership offer, which is being tweaked, that would be very much a brand proposition in that sense. We do feed into it quite a bit, it's quite – despite the size of the organisation it's quite small in many ways. I think a lot of people value input – teams that work here.

Facilitator:
Yes, let's talk a little more about the design of the brand experience.

Interviewee:

We have guidelines for it, identities for things. That doesn't apply to what we do inside the gallery or books that we make. When we stage a campaign for a major exhibition which will include underground advertising and so and so forth we have to work to brand guidelines as is most big scale institutions.

Facilitator:
They'd come from up above somewhere or would you have an opportunity to influence those from a curatorial perspective as well?

Interviewee:
We did a brand refresh exercise a couple of years ago. We all fed into that because there are things that just don't work for us. It's not – you can't have a poster that has a set box where we put the image in for example. If they were to lock it down that much then you're just like – this is a portrait painting, what are you going to do, are you going to crop the top. Are you going to try and – do you want us to go and negotiate with Dali's estate, about cropping the painting, no.
There's things like that where is just basic flexibility which of course they understand but you have to – it's very difficult sometimes to negotiate with people about following the Barbican logo straight across their artwork. That kind of thing. Boring.

Facilitator:
Thinking about building the Barbican "brand" experience, be it an exhibition, temporary installation, collaboration or other, are there any defining characteristics of the process are as your role as a curator? For example, you've brainstormed your planning for the year, your programming. You've thought of a series of new ideas, what happens, what do you do? Maybe it doesn't come in that order. Please can you tell me a little more about the process of this?

Interviewee:
Procrastinate for about six months. Again we're quite a small team so you are typically working on one show in development and one show is happening or at least guiding other people to – at my level guiding other people to bring it to fruition. You can be dealing with things simultaneously but the steps of making an exhibition from start to finish start with as you say, broadly scoped ideas and then getting those signed off. Then developing the concepts and looking for loans, so really a deep period of research.
The way I work, I like to work with a 2D and 3D designer quite early on in the process. I often bring people into the project team. We always work with external people quite early when I'm not necessarily – I haven't necessarily distilled all of the thinking or even have a checklist evolved. Sometimes, particularly because I'm design and architecture focused, and particularly with architecture you are dealing with representation usually, although that is

evolving.
If we were working with a living architect it might be somewhat different. You are dealing with the representation of things that aren't there anymore or are just somewhere else. That – working with a designer is often very helpful to think about how you might even display something.
I also think that one of the strengths of the Barbican's programme is the way in which we, especially in our main gallery where we hold our big survey shows is the way that we stage them, it's the changing nature of the gallery's experience itself and that's something we work very hard on.
We have this fantastic space, it's difficult in many sense but it's also – it's quite unique and quite special and so developing that spatial experience and atmosphere is something that I like to do particularly. I like to have it as a strong presence in making an exhibition so the earlier that I start to work with designers the better. I also enjoy the conversation that one has about a subject with people who are usually informed themselves and put it in a different way.

Facilitator:
When you do that do you put yourself in the shoes of the customer or the visitor or do you do it from a natural [unclear] experience or is it – when you think about…

Interviewee:
It's both actually. Yeah, you have to think about the journey that the visitor is going to go on and whether you want them to go on a prescribed route through a very particular narrative which is what we did with Bauhaus for example. It was important to start at the beginning and finish at the end with the story in that sense.
That does impact on what you do and spatially you actually are physically blocking people from going in certain directions, you're pushing them through a channel and then sometimes you can – it doesn't matter so much so you're a bit more freeform. You want to make quite free associations across the space between works. It's constantly thinking about the journey because that's what you're doing isn't it.

Facilitator:
Given your whole range of different target customers, how do you – which customer do you think about? Is it the expert who might come or is someone who…

Interviewee:
I think about them both. That comes into play very much with interpretation particularly textural interpretation. We don't have a fleet of in-house editors here who will Barbicanify the language. We have a – within the guidelines we have a set way of referring to things, a house style, if you like. At the V&A for example, every text would go through the museum's editor and would be turned into V&A language and made accessible for everybody.

Here we know that we're not the V&A, we don't have to work in that way but you have to engage somebody who's an expert, that you have to talk in a way that people understand it. You're constantly dealing with those tensions.

Facilitator:
You're going to get that, it's like anything isn't it? You can get people who are passionately interested in a subject and know all about it or it's their real hobby and then something like you say, this outreach programme, somebody who tries to get in and it might be a bit – how do you appeal to both and enable them both to enjoy the experience?

Interviewee:
Yeah. You also know that sometimes we make shows that we know will have an absolutely broad appeal. We know that kids of seven are studying Kandinsky at school or Warhol at school. We also make other shows when we know we have a very limited audience and it will people who know about John Cage and [unclear]. While you might get some people bringing their kids you're not going to get busloads of school parties coming in.
We also have different levels of access in interpretation happening. We've just started to do live guiding for people with sight impairments or…
We've got – for the Gaultier show they sent us a load of material samples so that people can feel what maybe the surface of an embroidered fabric of a dress that they're looking at feels like. That's been a quite – it's not very progressive of us to only be starting that in recent years, most museums do this. We've got – we recently had a fairly new front of house team who have really taken that challenge on themselves which has been great actually.
Then we have a whole learning team who do lots of work with different audiences whether it's interpretation for families and young people or working very directly with schools. The exhibition is a starting point for broader discussion about visual culture.

Facilitator:
In light of the different experiences you are delivering to such a wide set of people how you do measure an excellent exhibition or a piece of work that you've done, is it something that… [Over speaking]

Interviewee:
It's measured in lots of different ways. I can't go over budget, that's one way to measure. We're also managing these very large-scale projects. There's a practical set of measurements for making sure that it opens on time, that there aren't any disasters, that things are thought about very carefully, the care of objects, the display, means if they're secure both from accidents and theft and so on and that we're adhering to London's requirements for display.
Then we also measure in terms of whether a paid show reaches its income target and if it

doesn't, why hasn't it? If it had to be exceeded, [unclear]… Then there's also evaluation internally and then an evaluation with the visiting public trying to get feedback on our programme broadly, on our specific exhibitions.
There's lots of multilayers of evaluative processes and measuring. It's not overly heavy and formalised. It doesn't feel onerous in that way that some – we do have Arts Council funding so there's a lot of – and other types of funding for those income streams represent a necessity for valuation of a certain type as well.

Q3. Luxury Lifestyle

Facilitator:
Okay, thank you. I'd like to move onto your thoughts about curation in other environments, for example luxury retail. What are your thoughts about how the process and activity of curation differs say for example to what you do to what someone might do in a luxury retail environment?

Interviewee:
That's quite interesting this isn't it because it does and it doesn't. It depends on what luxury retail environment we're talking about. Years ago, 12 years ago, in fact, I was just at a party with a woman called Susanne Tide-Frater who used to be the creative director of Selfridges. Susanne and I went, when did we work together, oh years ago in 2004. Oh my God. I used to work for them. I did the consultancy for Selfridges, curating with artists and designers for big seasons. They're still doing that. Alannah Weston was always very interested in that kind of stuff.
When you talk on that level there is a desire, I think, for high-end luxury stores and big department stores to offer a different kind of experience that sits alongside the pure consumptions. We often work in association with shops to curate and market an exhibition. There is much more of an overtly blurring of the boundaries between exhibition and shop which is very interesting. We've done curatorial projects with Liberty, they did a whole set of windows in response to subject to an exhibition – the Surreal House exhibition.
For Bauhaus we partnered with COS and they did a whole set of Bauhaus inspired windows across all of their stores in London and on the continent. Then they had loads of give-aways for – directly promoting the brand. That's very marketing led, I think there are other opportunities we – it's not something I can talk about at the moment but there is something in the pipeline that will be much more of overtly blurring of the boundaries between gallery and shop and exhibition, which will be very interesting.
There aren't many people out there who can do that. Then I think you – if you're talking about Louis Vuitton working with Kusama for example, it's very interesting poetry I think. Fashion houses and – particularly in recent years have been very interested in that crossover and what artists represent. They always have the money to do quite [unclear] large-scale stuff.

I think retailers and art and museums is a very interesting conundrum and it's not anything new. Pure design started to be functional objects that people could buy in shops and were exhibited in museums in the late 19th century. You've got MoMA doing the whole series of good design for under $5 to buy programmes in the 40s.
You – it opens up an interesting set of questions about the ways in which you're being asked to look at objects and think about them. What is it about something that means that we might want to collect it and preserve it but also what is it about the way that we consume that makes – or the objects that we consume, what is it that makes them interesting enough to warrant enquiry in a museum context?
Sometimes that becomes controversial and people don't want to see those things in a museum setting. They think they – they're shocked or you – people get confused. They want to sit on the furniture that you have in the gallery or they want to know why they can't use the iPhone that you have on display. The blurring of the boundaries is quite interesting. There's also moments of time when those distinctions are broken down a bit where you start to see very particular attitudes come out from people.
I'm thinking in my mind this project that I can't talk about it, thinking about Diana's Vreeland's work at the Metropolitan Museum. When she joined the Met straight from Vogue and started to produce a series about exhibitions, there was outcry that she put on an exhibition of a living fashion designer, it was vulgar, it was what you saw in the shops, it's not what should be on show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. It poses questions about taste, about class, about status, about high culture, low culture.
I think that question for the department store is the same in what is it doing when it engages Murakami and Kusama in making work or doing the windows. Is it crass, hollow superficial branding and marketing or is it an interesting opportunity that they can do because they have money and that's what they think that their audiences or customers want to experience. It's about that sort of extra cultural whatever.

Facilitator:
A lot people can be quite snobby about that, blurring of retail and art and culture. You don't seem to be, you seem to be interested in it and open to it?

Interviewee:
Yeah for sure. It's fascinating. I'm motivated by material culture, that's not like – I don't have a problem with it at all I think it's a fascinating. I think how amazing would it have been to have lived in Paris at the end of the 19th century with all of the department stores popping up.

Facilitator:
And the experience in the luxury department stores?

Interviewee:

Absolutely mind boggling and spectacular. I think in a way, I don't know, I sometimes if we're talking about big department stores I'm a bit sad because they've become a bit homogenous and the spectacle's – because it has gone in a certain direction and it's not so much of a spectacle anymore. It's a bit more prosaic and actually what you what is to enter a fantasyland that is expressive of all your darkest capitalist consumerist desires.
Whether you subscribe to that. These days maybe one shouldn't admit that that's still…

Facilitator:
Why not?

Interviewee:
…keeps your interest.

Facilitator:
You think about the origin of the department store that was the Great Exhibition, that was the whole point of it, wasn't it? Weren't the colonial countries bringing back items to put on display, which in some form represented a curatorial practice, but in department stores?

Interviewee:
In some ways it may be that they're asking curators to come and do windows, they're trying to create that again, that resurgence of that spectacle or the spectacular exhibition in some ways. You can understand that it is their way to differentiate themselves too.

Facilitator:
In what way?

Interviewee:
To give some credence maybe to what they do. I just met – I did a studio visit with a designer last week who's been invited to do a really quite big Christmas display at Rinascente in Milan which is a fabulous department store. You can't help but think back to what Thomas Heatherwick did for Harvey Nichols at have beginning of his career.
I like the fact that stores like that are out looking at what's happening in practice and they're interested in what people are making and they give them an opportunity that on one level it's there to sell and promote the brand but commerce, everything that we do is bought and sold. I don't think that even – I think it's sometimes – the deciding factor for me is the quality of what's done I suppose.

Facilitator:
On that subject – one of the things that Louis Vuitton are doing at the moment is they're calling their virtual merchandisers curators. How do you feel about that?

Interviewee:

I don't know. I think everybody's calling everybody a curator at the moment, it's a bit tedious, I don't even like to call myself a curator. I decided that maybe I might call myself a producer or an exhibition maker in the future or something I don't know. Yeah, it's getting a little bit tiresome, it's also general fatigue as well. I'm not sure we can bear another book on curatorial practice.

Actually seriously I was – I found it quite surprising that if you wrote the word curator in Microsoft Word it doesn't exist. You've got to spellcheck error coming up. People are getting to grips with what this means. I think there's a lot of reflection within the field itself, particularly within younger fields like fashion curation or design curation which doesn't have as much longer term scholarship and introspection of the field of art curation's has.

I don't know, fine, whatever. I guess what one has to ask why they're doing that. What is it about the term visual merchandising that they find wanting and what is it that they're trying to recover, add value or imply by using the word by curator. I think that's the interesting issue.

Facilitator:

Yeah. Exactly, do you think people can add value by using the term?

Interviewee:

Yeah. Sometimes it can seem just zeitgeisty rather than it being really carefully thought through. They move at such a pace that you can't imagine them sitting there having quite in-depth research based discussion on curatorial practice. It smacks of trend I think.

However, then I think that's suggesting that visual merchandisers don't do that and I think they do, absolutely, but I think they just represent the different type of practice. It opens up into interesting questions about what are the motivations, the status of the artefacts.

A lot of curators – I was recently at a symposium, the London College of Fashion regarding the establishment of a new course Fashion Curation. This is polar opposite to a panel of museum curators where it is all about the authenticity of the artefacts, accuracy, knowledge and scholarship. The curators at the LCF let that go because the overall vision and experience is what's important. They're working in a much looser way – and wanting to be provocative, while of course, being respectful of history. They're wanting to build a narrative and to – they accept that sometimes the projects are like props in the way that they're props in visual merchandising in a luxury retail store.

You should have a look at Judith Clark and Amy de la Haye who are the co-directors of this Centre for Fashion Curation, they've just published a book by Yale called *Exhibiting Fashion Before and After 1971*.

Facilitator:

Thank you for the reference.

Interviewee:
It looks – the case study is Cecil Beaton's fashion and anthology curation. Amy does a lot as an ex V&A curator to examine the museological side of things and then Judith looks at the [tropes] of Beaton's staging. Then there's a whole inventory of fashion exhibitions. I think you'd find that quite interesting.

Facilitator:
Yeah. I will definitely. Thank you very much.

Interviewee:
Judith is somebody who has worked in both a museum context and a shop context and…

Facilitator:
So she might be interested in talking to me?

Interviewee:
Yeah. Judith Clark.
She has a website so you can…

Facilitator:
Oh okay, definitely thank you so much, that's great, wonderful.

Interviewee:
The project that – where we might pursue something around this whole territory is a big project with guest curators looking at the notion of the vulgar and vulgarity. We're talking with (retailer name omitted due to requested confidentiality) about doing a big collaboration…

Facilitator:
It sounds exciting – a new curation collaboration?

Interviewee:
Yes, a collaborative thing. It's a couple of years away and it's confidential. I know Judith very well and we're – she would have been researching this idea of the vulgar and what it means over history and what it – it's a very subjective term that one implies and opens up lots of issues about sexuality and class and…
Yeah, it's very rich and potent and – I heard that she was beginning to research in this area and we invited her to come and make an exhibition with us.

Facilitator:
It sounds like an interesting collaborative exhibition with a luxury retailer – what is the

objective for (retailer name omitted due to requested confidentiality)?

Interviewee:
I think the subject is brilliant and can spark a lot of interesting comment. It seems very right for now, there are all these tangles and discussions particularly – it will be a fashion exhibition, a fashion and dress exhibition primarily but it does have a lot to say about society in broader terms and what's acceptable and what's not in terms of language and a new and different experience for (retailer name omitted due to requested confidentiality)…

Facilitator:
Talking about your collaborations, and a good example of your new one in the process of being developed, do you think curators or curative directors and fashion can learn from each other in the two different environments?

Interviewee:
Yeah, I do. I think that on a very basic level I think there's a lot one could learn about strategies of display. I sometimes think the museum world is a bit too heavily – it's got to privilege the object. I think when you look back at the photos that Cecil Beaton has done on fashion and anthology for example, it's amazing what's built around these objects in order to give this atmosphere or further convey the reading that he wanted you to have or the context. I think sometimes museums and galleries should think about that a little bit more maybe. I don't know if you've seen the Glamour of Italian Fashion at the V&A…

Facilitator:
No, I haven't seen it.

Interviewee:
…but it's the least glamourous exhibition you've ever been to. The poster was beautiful, white shirts, very dynamic. I took my mother a couple of weeks ago, she wanted to see the Wedding Dresses exhibition as well so we did the two. I knew it wasn't – I'd read a lot and heard a lot that it wasn't the best exhibition. In depth very scholarly probably great book for – my mum's not particularly – she goes to exhibitions but it's not something she thinks about. She was like, they didn't even have the garment that was on the poster that was really annoying.

Facilitator:
I can see why that was annoying…it didn't meet your expectations of the experience at all?

Interviewee:
The poster promised this dynamic –you think of Italian or 20th century fashion, you salivate.

Then you get there and it's very static and there's not very much. You're just like, where's the glamour, it's all very grey. Just channel the retail experience and go – but maybe that's deliberate because you can go to Prada or [Miu Miu] and have this bonanza world. I think you look at the staging of super high-end fashion shows and you just think crikey, it's amazing, they're so imaginative. I think there's a lot to be said for that to be said for display strategies that – and spatial ideas.
Facilitator:
Which is what Louis Vuitton are doing, aren't they with the huge investment in their new cultural institution and linkage to art and visual displays?

Interviewee:
Do you think they're alienating people though? I think it is interesting what they are doing. It is interesting to think about whether people feel like they can't go into those spaces because they can't afford those objects, but they still want an experience. I wonder whether LV is losing this crowd. It's interesting to think about what story they're telling, and how they are trying to engage in light of the need for provenance building, recognition of power of history and setting themselves in this very particular artisan or craft-led market because it gives authenticity and it gives status as that's what they need to back up (their story) and have validity. It's really complex territory.

Facilitator:
Is it comparable at all to your world from a visitor experience sense?
Interviewee:
I think it's fascinating. I think some institutions would do well to maybe engage more. I think in here you talk a little bit about the retail, gift shop at the end of the visit that's become much more of a pronounced presence. Particularly the V&A where the shop is at the centre of the plan of the museum and Tate Modern feels like a shopping centre more than an art gallery. There are varying degrees of success and I think that people are sophisticated in the way that they consume. I think museums and galleries have to be quite sharp about how they operate, not least because if you're – if you've got a target in the museum shop you've got to make yourself quite distinct, you can't just rely on flogging the catalogue and some postcards although the postcards always sell well.
You've got to work hard to create something that appeals – it feels like a strong proposition. If you get – it's sad sometimes when you go into some institutions and you're just like you can be so brilliant but you're getting it so wrong. It's so dry and frosty maybe appealing to a very – audiences are hugely diverse I think.
Facilitator:
Would this enhance the experience?

Interviewee:

Institutions always want to grow their audience and improve the visitor experience – and some of the things outside of the domain of the scholarly, shall we say, are really key to get right.

Facilitator:
To what degree to you get involved in retail when you're looking at exhibitions in terms of retail opportunities for you to sell things that are connected to your story, narrative, exhibition or experience?

Interviewee:
We have a whole team who deal with that. We have a shop in the gallery which is always dedicated to the subject of the exhibition. I might just know some designers and producers who I think are interesting, I'll just pass their details on. We've worked with independent retailers in London who are making their own stuff to do special ranges for us.
You just want something that you know is going to appeal to your market and want to sometimes associate yourself with some cool and interesting brands, whether they're small or large-scale. You have – but you always have to do things that you think are right. When it comes down to pure marketing our marketing team will lead on those partnerships and associations.
For our pop show we – they developed an association with American apparel and an American apparel company ripped off the show and did a load of windows. For Gautier we did a – we had our first café and bakery partnership, it was so cool, made striped croissants or éclairs or something like that. You think [Paul] is like the [Greggs] of France, fine, whatever, but it has a different status here and it means you just get into all of those chains and you get the word about the exhibition out to a broad audience. It's about trying to reach people to bring them to us. In a big show it's very basic. You make decisions that you feel are right but also that are going to go somewhere.
There's our retail team in fact.

Facilitator:
It is interesting that you have incorporated retail as part of the Barbican experience. Do you think this is quite common or innovative in cultural institutions?

Interviewee:
No. Some curators still have an aversion. They find retail a dirty word.

Facilitator:
Every time I go somewhere either on my own or with my kids, I buy something because it's part of the experience and I take it home with me, why do you think others find this dirty or don't find this an equally valuable part of the visitor experience?

Interviewee:
They can make a lot of money as well! You need to plant back into making an institution fun. You can't be so averse to retail – nobody has enough money to adopt a snobby attitude about these things anymore. I think those days are over in the public sector for sure. Everybody has to be innovative in the way that they try and maximise the experience to get people to enjoy it and come back…

Facilitator:
Thank you Catherine. We're now at the end of the interview. Is there anything you'd like to ask me about the interview itself or general discussion?

Interviewee:
No, I don't think so.

Facilitator:
Fantastic, thank you so much for your time – it's been great.

Interviewee:
It has been really, really is interesting talking to you, fascinating, really. Do I represent the maybe different perspectives professionally?

Facilitator:
From what you've talked about, you seem to be drawing on your curatorial skills and experience and embracing cross-industry opportunities to improve the customer experience and asking interesting questions around what could be done differently. That's really helpful for my data collection – thank you again.

Interviewee:
I think – I don't know, you've got to allow for that, the worlds are similar whether you consider one to be superficial and the other not is the crux of the matter. I think it's hard to dismiss it so easily. I don't know, it's just – if you're collecting ceramics from an artist who has a gallerist the commercial arrangement is different, the method of making is different to what you might find in Liberty a bit, there's a lot of synergy and a lot of overlap.
I think it's particularly when it comes to multiple maybe where, I don't know, oh, what am I trying to say? I think if you compare the art world commerciality with luxury brands you wouldn't find it's so different at all. When it comes to design artefacts, things that everybody has, the reason for looking at them in a museum is because very often they're completely successful, they're very well designed, you also interrogate what it is about this object that works aesthetically on a level of production and technological advancement.

The focus is to try and get audiences to engage with things in a way that is multi-layered and more in depth. To have a conversation about how these things have changed our world and the way that we interact with one another and the way that we – the materials that we surround ourselves with and what they say about us.
I think that's always why I've been more interested in design history and material culture more broadly rather than autonomous art practice because I'm interested in what you and I share and what we've got in our homes that identify things about us. That's when the museum and the hard consumer world can – you can't deny the crossover and why would you want to? The notion that communication's very important and learning, that's really the key objective. Then you're going to find things that support that message or platform. I think the starting point's a little bit different from just discussions. I think the actual practice, the principles of the curation I think there's some crossover, I think…
You might want to talk to Shaun Cole who's the Head of Fashion History and Curation at [LCF2]. He used to be my colleague at the V&A with curator called Carol Tulloch. He organised an exhibition called Black British Style. They had a whole series of trainers in the show and they very deliberately used the language of a shop. They spoke quite explicitly about that.

Facilitator:
Many thanks for the reference!

Interviewee:
That was very much because of what – they knew that they would have an audience, a dimension of an audience who – for whom that retail experience would be an access point and make – perhaps make it seem more about what they were used to rather than a rarefied – in a museum context.

Facilitator:
Absolutely. You worked with him did you?

Interviewee:
Yeah. We did a project with [Bauhaus] a couple of years ago and his [architect's] practice ….We had the shop in the middle of the gallery because that's his project, the preoccupation of shopping, he's written a whole book about that, the *Harvard Guide to Shopping.* He's done a lot of work in recent years with Prada, of course, staging a lot of their shows and doing their shops.
He's particularly interested in this cultural consumer [unclear] – it was to him just the most normal thing to put the shop in the middle because that's what institutions are doing more and more. That's the world that they have to engage with and that's what people – they're comfortable with it as well. Although some aren't of course.

Facilitator:

Was there any key learning from that experience?

Interviewee:

Yes. It came back to this communication of the meaning and the history of their assets, how to nuance that.

Facilitator:

Some interesting reflections for future curatorial work?

Interviewee:

Yes absolutely. Thank you very much for the interview. It was really nice to meet you.

Facilitator:

No, thank you very much for the interview and the references. It was really helpful and great to meet you too.

Appendix 5: Summary of the Identified Seven Curatorial Activities in the Luxury Retail Environment

Type of Company or Institution	Name of Company or Institution	Curatorial Activities Identified						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		Research	**Filtering Ideas and Developing Concepts**	**Acquiring Knowledge**	**Develop Concepts, Point of View and an Edit**	**Art of Display**	**Storytelling**	**Experience (E.g. entertain, educate or other)**
Multi-Brand Luxury Retailer	Selfridges	Yes – Researching all the time. We have our finger on the pulse of the zeitgeist globally, out in the world looking at everything, soaking it all up. We pick up patterns and trends and turn them into ideas best suited to the brand and message Selfridges wants to get out there	Yes – curation comes from the sieve. We sieve out the things we think are relevant and good and strong trends that fit us and our brand Championing ideas and turn them into concepts	Yes – we identify key collaborators and partners we want to work with	Yes – we curate the concepts that get embedded in everyone and brief out to all the key delivery people in the business from buying to merchandising to window displays, website, online to develop experiences in store We have a whole calendar for the year and its filled with developed concepts to roll out across the business	Yes – every customer touch point, all tangible and intangible, is in our brief. Designing Experiences including: Pop-up Installation, Windows, Special Projects, Graphics, Signage. The product on the shopfloor is guided by the creative concept	Yes – stories are important so that they (the customers) can feel like they've had the Selfridges experience	Yes – it is the number one thing that's talked about here all of the time. You're the keeper of the brand. You're battling to make sure it's creative, it's cool, it's current, it's not something somebody else is doing. Two main functions of the Creative Director: design experience for people who connect with the brand, who Selfridges is as a brand
	Liberty	Yes – whenever we're starting a collection I would do a whole body of research about an idea in mind, that research would be visual rather than historical or fact based Yes – we keep looking and researching to see what customers want and try to influence them We come up with concepts that will roll out across Liberty and knit the brand experience together	Yes – the visual research is that edited to find common links amongst it and present a story for the season We explore visually before we build. We expand and trial different ideas and prototype. There's many, many different ways that – it depends on the concept and narrowing that down to actually speak clearly about the concept or how you want the customers to experience the concept	Yes – you need to know your customers and know the profiles of the brands in order to build a collection	Yes – I think a curator is somebody who is like an editor in a magazine: using their own taste to hand pick things that communicate a story around a subject, extracting from research a narrative and arranging the work to communicate the tale they want to tell Yes – editing a collection of multi-brands. I create the house with all of the multiple brands to sit there alongside each other	Yes – a good curator is also a very good editor and isn't shy of knocking things out and not showing too little or too much. I want to make the building look and feel like what people perceive Liberty is.	Yes – I think a good curator will tell a very powerful, concise story of an era or a trend. It's about developing something creative that can communicate. The story can be that all the products are different and the story is there is no common bond. Or it could be a common thread you're trying to create a mood for the season and educate the customer	Yes – create a mood for the season and educate the customer. Sometimes we want to move our customers on, hopefully educate them to something new and expanding Yes – as the conductor, I'm influencing everything, the designing of the brand experience, every single bit of it
	Matchesfashion.com	Yes – it's not as strictly academic but extremely practical; they're (the buyers) out in the markets seeing 400 brands now 4 times a year. They're having conversations with designers, visiting their studios, there's a real understanding. They're looking at cultural things that tie into that. And at reference points to create the edit, the story and the narrative	2Y3e4s5 6- we consider editing the buy to be part of our DNA and our biggest point of difference as a luxury retailer	Yes – extremely practical as out in the markets four times a year	Yes – the curator or buyer and their curated edit influences design of the brand experience Matches. It's absolutely at the core. The edit and curation is one of our pillars. Anything that becomes a pillar for us, we actually talk about how that touches every department. The buyer's edit will direct all the other parts, how we'll play everything else in the season, from what events we'll do to what we'll write about in our magazine	Yes – if you are going to make your customers come into something physical you need theatre, entertainment, the physical experience is becoming more and more like an installation. We launch concepts in stores, almost studios or exhibition spaces	Yes – we curate stories to bring to life what a designer does, which is very much what people are doing in galleries and exhibition installations	Yes – the curation of the buy and the stories behind it will set a tone across the entire site and boutiques

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Curatorial Activities Identified	**Research**	**Filtering Ideas and Developing Concepts**	**Acquiring Knowledge**	**Develop Concepts, Point of View and an Edit**	**Art of Display**	**Storytelling**	**Experience (E.g. entertain, educate or other)**
Sole Luxury Brand Retailer	Louis Vuitton	Yes – but in retail it's such a limited time, everyone is doing things quickly. You don't have time to really do deep research	Not stated	Yes – through collaborations	Yes – curation is when you bring your subjective interpretation of an idea to represent a concept or perspective	Yes – all of the people who work in visual merchandising are curating and they gather products to make a story	Yes – for entertaining and surprising customers	Yes – it is more and more about creating experiences. There is a desire to surprise all of the time
Exhibition Curators	Somerset House	Yes – we undertake considerable research	Yes – we sift new ideas and concepts Bring experience to bear on an idea Editing and curating share a lot of the same things in the retail or exhibition world	Yes – curators do a diverse role like retail and are not narrow and specialised	Yes – editing and curating share a lot of the same things. The way I see it is that we're like a magazine. An interesting magazine that covers a lot of subjects. It's like having a very editorial eye so like Vanity Fair or something. So we like exhibitions to have a curatorial view	Yes – Positioning items or products strategically to create an experience You work with designers too to help you work out how to walk through the space and displays, how you experience it all	Yes – Curators are in a nutshell storytellers. Storytellers with something to say. You can't be a curator if you don't understand and tell the story of your subject. If you are doing an exhibition you are telling a story.	Yes – in the end it is solely about what the visitor encounters. We want a luxury brand experience .It is about how the visitors find out what the story is, how they move through it and what they take away from it. You need to get the story across without writing labels and sticking them on a wall – the easy way out. You have to make people feel it. Layering the education is really important for the experience
	Barbican	Yes – curation is supposed to be about research. It can entail a really deep period of research	Yes – curation is about editing and taking a new perspective on a subject matter	Yes – we always work with informed external people early when I haven't necessarily distilled all of the thinking, regarding spatial experience and atmosphere	Yes – what we always take a contemporary, new perspective on a subject matter. We we're quite interested in cross-disciplinary opportunity, to cross-pollinate ideas and concepts	Yes – curation for me is about staging. You think about the journey the visitor will go on. Spatial experience and atmosphere is something I like to have as a strong presence in making an exhibition	Yes – it's about crafting a narrative to support the journey	Yes – the focus is to try and get audiences to engage with things in a way that is multi-layered and more in-depth. Storytelling, communication and learning experiences are very important, the key objective
	House of Voltaire	Yes – we seek the new, the future of design and research emerging artists	Not stated	Yes – to identify new and emerging artists	Yes – we play a key role in supporting artists who have been under-represented or neglected and give them a platform	Not stated	Not stated	Yes – it is about producing experiences
	Richard Saltoun Gallery	Yes – research is a huge part of the curation process. We spend most of our time on research.	Yes – you need the nexus, the main focus point and then you think about if it was going to be based on just one nexus or multiple	Yes – we do a lot of research, particularly when you have a new idea that you'd necessarily know anything about. We're going to see what other galleries are doing, what artists they're working with.	Yes – we do 10 exhibitions a year. You need to create the nexus and think about how you represent the idea. You need to think about how to put it in layman's terms, how to vocalize it so that the idea is accessible	Yes – it's similar to retail in terms of aesthetics and presentation- how much text you put on the wall, whether you do at all. The main thing is you need to give space to breathe, for people to look at it. It's the small things like the way the gallery looks, all come into play in creating a look or aesthetic	Yes – in an exhibition it is about putting works of art together to tell a story, create meaning and enable interpretation whilst guiding with the story	Yes – the role of curation is to stimulate and educate the audience, you need to help people understand the idea behind it, you need to think how you will vocalize it so that people who aren't aware can actually access it, learn and experience it

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	Curatorial Activities Identified	**Research**	**Filtering Ideas and Developing Concepts**	**Acquiring Knowledge**	**Develop Concepts, Point of View and an Edit**	**Art of Display**	**Storytelling**	**Experience (E.g. entertain, educate or other)**
Permanent Collection Curator	Royal Collection (previous)	No – not necessarily as curation is about already having an in-depth knowledge about the subject. However, it is about identifying artists and objects.	Yes – having an idea, then to visually manifest it and adding intellectual value to it. It refers to having an idea of selection and the idea of choosing the right thing. Then it is more about pulling it altogether, organizing the loans between museums which is the administration side which isn't the curator's job, you have a registrar for that	No – only to keep up to date with theory or latest publications as already a subject matter expert	Yes – there is a wish to educate through the curation of objects and contribution of theoretical knowledge	Yes – curation is about arranging and getting the work together. Deciding where you're going to put it. Putting up labels. It could be video or virtual objects. I think it's perfectly valid to curate something virtually. I think curating is adding intellectual value through objects	No – There could be a catalogue. Curators will definitely have to go through some processes with the exhibition catalogue, with the labels, the text panels. They often aren't involved in writing the press literature because they won't write something sexy enough. This stuff has to be interesting and user-friendly and some curators aren't so good at that. Too academic.	Experience not mentioned but education mentioned
	British Museum	Yes – we have the best academics in the world	Yes – continually around the Exhibition schedule	No	Yes – it provides authority for the British Museum brand	Yes – it's about education	Not stated	Education and our lectures and experience get you to buy into the brand of the British Museum
	Victoria and Albert Museum and	Yes – it is about constantly identifying new ideas and themes	Yes – Editing in a museum as a curator and in retail is a really similar process. It's about making choices. The important thing for any curator is make intelligent choices but in doing that it means that they have to be able to edit. Most museum curators find it very difficult to edit so they try and fill their cases full of crap rather than find the few things that will tell a story.	Yes – temporary exhibitions in Somerset House is all about curating exhibitions, you can come up with ideas yourself about a subject matter or put together a really fantastic exhibition	Yes – I think there are the same processes going on in exhibitions and retail, so I think selection, editing, thinking about what you're trying to say with what you've got and presenting it is all there	Yes – curation is about choice and it's about display. It seems to be that retail is all about choice. About people making choices and displaying it in such a way that people can buy what is on sale.	It's quite often that museum curators don't want things to change and don't think about the story of why and what they're (objects) being preserved for. Curators imagine that everyone wants to see as many objects as possible, they don't – they just want the story and experience	Yes – it is all about expect the unexpected. Temporary exhibitions focus on the experience because it is more than just the objects - you can see absolutely stunning objects but it needs to give you the context so that you understand, a richer story
	Design Museum	Yes – if the curation is in a progressive cultural institution which focuses on the future the research will be about looking forward, identifying what tomorrow's iconic design and enabling others to understand it	Yes – if the curation is based in a forward-future facing cultural institution like the Design Museum, which is different to the British Museum which is more focused on heritage, the preservation of a collection	Yes if in a progressive, future-facing cultural institution like the Design Museum as always seeking the new and innovative	When you are curating a permanent collection it is about the history of the object.	When you are curating an exhibition it's about how you link together, the thought behind it and what it stands for. It's selecting a range of products and putting them together in a way that tells a story. That's the same process in a luxury shop	Yes – telling a story and educating what objects are telling us. When you're curating a permanent collection it is about the history. When you're curating an exhibition it's about the idea and approaching the subject from a different angle to tell a story	Yes – retailers are moving into curation because they're forever trying develop brand experience, there's no question Predominantly, museums are educational and I think the retailers are going down that route as they want to be taken seriously. Fashion is a huge education industry

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Cultural Institution Curator Consultant	Metaphor	Yes –about identifying the new and how it relates to the vision, the story and the experience	Yes – exhibition curation is about exhibition design, editing, journalism, story, content and design which depends on ideas	Yes – constantly researching	Yes – we give an overall philosophy and design a journey	Curation is interpretive design and display that generates an experience. It's about using space as a receptacle for a scenario, for an experience Bringing the subject matter to life. The best retailer/exhibition designer understands the art of display I get all my best ideas from retail, e.g. Selfridges	Yes – what I love about curation is that we bring it to life by storytelling, audience language Storytelling is combined with design and envisioning I think museum curators are not storytellers. I think this is the real problem. I think museum curators are people who look after objects and know their subjects.	Yes – everyone is in to co-creation which is something about our culture. This means that everyone is a creative or wishes to contribute to the experience
Art / Luxury Retail Creative Director	Mario Testino	Not stated	Yes – the curator is the editor and the selector	Yes	Yes – the curator plays a role of the editor. It's a given with luxury brands because they have their brand identity, editor in place, they have their curator. A point of view is more critical than it ever has been and that is what a curator is	Yes – they are stylists around the edit	The curator is the producer of the overall narrative The curator has the license to make a statement outside and position a brand somewhere quite long way away, not going off-piste but giving things a context that will make people re-think	The curator is the producer of the overall experience to make it exciting and very educational