CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

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2.1.0 What is meant by Luxury?

Luxury is often understood colloquially as a higher standard of life, it may mean different things for different people based on their economic status, social standing, cultural affiliations or for that matter lifestyle. Many poets and luxury fashion icons have had their own interpretations of luxury some of which are mentioned below.

"Le superflu, chose très-nécessaire" ("the superfluous, a very necessary thing") is line-22 in the philosophical French poem *Le Mondain* (The Worldling) (Voltaire, 1736). This poem caused much furore during the time and was followed by another in 1737 by the same poet with the title "*Défense du Mondain ou l'apologie du luxe"* ('Defense of the Worldling or an Apology for Luxury"). Both poems were a critique on pursuing hedonistic tendencies, one personal and the latter social (Morize, 1909)

"The best things in life are free. The second-best things are very, very expensive" is one of the famous one-liners by Coco Chanel, one of the largest fashion icons of the world.

"Quality is remembered long after its price is forgotten", Aldo Gucci Chairman of the Gucci shops Inc.

One may conclude from the aforementioned quotes that luxury has been understood as excessive, unnecessary, and decadent by some and worthy, inspirational by others. Hence, it remains a complex subject, with contradiction in its understanding and perception.

In research, luxury is understood as self-indulgent, wasteful, and brazen (Roux and Floch, 1996). Luxury is understood as a product or a service that is hard to acquire or rare and is available for purchase only to a privileged few (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). While many definitions exist in research about luxury, one can agree that it is subjective and varies based on the circumstances and the consumer (Campbell, 1987). Luxury is also identified by its limited supply, its exclusivity, high technical sophistication or quality, craftsmanship and high price *(*Kapferer 1998; Vigneron & Johnson 2004).

The next obvious discussion is whether luxury is unnecessary or can it be a necessity in certain lifestyles? There is an argument that, it is "an obvious fact that luxuries are not needed" (Berry, 1994, p.23) and so one need not consider it a necessity (Brannen, 1996).

Conclusively, when all necessities are fulfilled, can one freely think of obtaining luxury. This line of thinking can be countered with the "trickle down" effect, which argues that the luxuries of one generation, become the common requirements of the next (Twitchell, 2001). In the present day, many will agree that the desire to acquire luxury can be for various reasons and a luxury may coexist even if some necessities remain unfulfilled. In such cases, we may be forced to think whether the acquisition of luxury was due to a lifestyle choice, to keep up with one's peers, to make a conspicuous display of one's upward social mobility, a status seeking purchase, or was it merely for one's personal pleasure?

The acquisition of luxury may be to present one's superiority or to have uniqueness that can help differentiate oneself from others (Bhat & Reddy, 1998).

Each of these reasons are well accepted in research and have been explained in the context of luxury consumption related behaviours and can find their genesis in social class which will be discussed further on.

To understand luxury, one needs to first understand what constitutes luxury in the real world and what are the associated variables that motivate a consumer to spend on luxury. The one way to differentiate luxury from non-luxury goods is to understand that luxury determines the price and not the other way around (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). The perceived price of a luxury item always is overestimated than its actual price, and so it increases the standing of the user of the product (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009). A product with a high price is often perceived to be of better quality (Rao and Monroe, 1989) and this idea is supported in research, where a positive association has been found between a higher price and the discernment of better quality (Erickson & Johansson, 1985) (Tellis & Gaeth, 1990). Sometimes the desirability of a select product or service may be directly proportional to its price (Groth & McDaniel, 1993). Some researchers defined luxury as that which had the highest price vs. quality ratio (McKinsey, 1990) (Nueno & Quelch, 1998). Luxury products are marked by their limited supply, they are marketed as difficult to obtain and rare. When a product becomes rare, the perception of its value increases in the minds of the consumer (Lynn, 1991) (Pantzalis, 1995).

Luxury products are those that are not necessary but provide pleasure or satisfaction to the consumer. Luxury products tend to satisfy hedonic needs rather than utilitarian needs. On the one hand hedonic products endow gratification and exhilaration (designer handbags, shoes, luxury watches, etc.), on the other hand utilitarian products are predominantly functional or practical (refrigerators, personal computers, etc.) (Hirschmanand & Holbrook 1982)

(Strahilevitz & Myers, 1998). Utilitarian products have a practical utility and are essential, in contrast to hedonic products which may bring delight, joy and have an essence of fun or pleasure (Dhar & Wertenbroch, 2000) (Voss et al., 2003). In the mind of the consumer, luxury brands are associated with high degree of price, rarity, quality, aesthetics, uniqueness, and intangible characteristics as well. The intangible features can be prestige, status, self-concept, upward mobility, and exhibitionism. Luxury goods are purchased for their emotional appeal over and above their utilitarian features, it gives pleasure to the consumer (Dubois & Laurent, 1994) and helps express their lifestyle (Rytilahti, 2008).

The luxury product market provides many choices to its consumers. So how do consumers make their final choice from a sea of choices? Status consumption is of course one of the indicators (Han et al., 2010), the knowledgeable consumer chooses the less conspicuous product (Berger & Ward, 2010) and third is the longevity of the uniqueness or exclusivity offered by the product (Stamatogiannakis et al., 2017). These are some of the motivations that lead consumers toward their final selection.

2.2.0 Feudalism to Post-Modernism: The history of conspicuous consumption

The story of luxury is incomplete without the mention of conspicuous consumption. All classes of people indulge in conspicuous consumption. To justify this statement, one needs to delve into the meaning and history of conspicuous consumption.

Thorstein Veblen (1899/1994) was among the frontrunners to come up with this concept of “pecuniary emulation” based on observations, but it was not a subject well received by noted economists at the time. It was only after the Great Depression (1929–1939) that economists and researchers began to note and understand the far-reaching effects of conspicuous consumption on the economy. In the late 1940s, researchers rather simplified conspicuous consumption as irrational purchase behaviour and the terms “snob effect” or “bandwagon” were used to explain a concept which was later understood as psychological or socio-cultural constructs (Chaudhari & Majumdar, 2006).

If one looks at India’s history, one can observe through artefacts that nobles adorned themselves with jewellery, owned horses and elephants and carried an entourage with them.

Thrones, palaces, bejewelled tombs that can be considered as "wasteful" consumption had been utilized to segregate the ruler and the subjects. Such lavish display of wealth was evident elsewhere in the gladiator fights organized by the Romans (Finlay, 1973) and even in the early Polynesian cultures (Leach, 2003). In primitive societies, this conspicuousness was conveyed through money and brazen muscle power in the form of armies (Page,1992).
The luxury of each era may be different, but its role in defining a social class cannot be ignored. Europe faced a different reality in the post industrialized society, where the middle class became enthusiastic purveyors of the flamboyant, which was earlier confined only for the elite class (Page,1992). In the time after WWII, there was a rapid increase of capitalism which replaced the socialist and communist economies in greater part of the world. The late 70s were marked with an increased focus on marketing and consumption of commodities rather than production alone and this era was the beginning of post-modernism (Chaudhari & Majumdar, 2006). In post-modern societies, such as the one we live in today, conspicuous consumption is available for the masses and not limited to a select few (Chaudhuri & Majumdar, 2006).

The changing demographics gave rise to the inconspicuous or understated luxury consumer. The obvious markers of conspicuous consumption now existed in conjunction with the new "tasteful" and "understated" consumption by those Bourdieu (1984) referred to as "elites", who through an acquisition of "cultural capital" through institutionalized education (Bourdieu, 1986) and geographical mobility acquired what may be called a "refinement" or "sophistication", and their status was conveyed through these understated mechanisms (Mason, 1981). It would be prudent to note that conspicuous consumption is not to seek status alone, there can be many other antecedents to explain its presence. Conspicuous consumption can also be present when an individual seeks social conformity or differentiation.

2.3.0 Emulation, conformity, or differentiation?

Conspicuous consumption has a purpose, it can be socio-cultural or psychological. It is not all about status, there are other antecedents at play that can push a consumer towards a conspicuous purchase.

The concept of "pecuniary emulation" was introduced by Veblen (1899/1994), in which he deducted that individuals in a social class try to emulate the next higher class in terms of status.

The purpose of this to associate oneself with them. This can also be labelled as a kind of conformity that one class wishes to adhere; to be perceived as higher in stature than one is.
Luxury is used by consumers to conform to a social group or to dissociate from it. This might sound contradictory in nature; however, luxury can be used to conform to a higher social class and if the same luxury product is mass marketed then the consumers would dissociate from it because it no longer remains exclusive (Srinivasan et al., 2014a).
Whether a consumer chooses to buy a product or not, also depends on what it stands for in the eyes of others (Corneo & Jeanne, 1997). Expanding this thought onto conspicuous consumption, individuals conform to the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and norms of their own reference group (Bearden & Etzel, 1982) and may engage in similar consumption patterns. Consumer predilections for luxury items that are consumed in the public domain are likely to be motivated by conspicuousness (Bearden & Etzel,1982).

High end luxury products are marketed as exclusive or rare, limited in its supply, for which one may have to wait several years. The aspiration remains to achieve uniqueness or differentiation from the rest. What was explained by Leibenstein (1950) as the "snob effect", can also be interpreted as a desire for enhanced self-concept (Dubois & Duquesne, 1993). Individuals might want to make a "statement" to announce their "arrival" on to the social scene and such a luxury purchase may be used as a symbolism for upward mobility.
Exhibitionism or conspicuous display of luxury satisfies the aim of achieving higher social status (Patsiaouras, 2010) as a symbol associated with upward mobility. It is important to note that similar exhibitionism of luxury including experiential consumption through social media posts also falls under the purview of conspicuous consumption (Duan & Dholakia, 2017). So, such exhibitionism clearly expresses an individual's status and lifestyle to the audience at large.

2.4.0 The Relationship of luxury with Prestige and Status

Status consumption has many antecedents such as indulging in exhibitionism to display wealth or as a signifier of a personal achievement (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004); to achieve social acceptance of peers or for enhancement of self-concept (self-esteem) (Truong et al., 2008). It can also be used to symbolise upward mobility or arrival to the social scene (Eastman et al., 1999). Hence, status consumption has the distinctiveness of being both conspicuous and discreet (Eastman & Eastman, 2015). Luxury products satisfy the hedonic needs of its

consumers due its emotional appeal (Weidmann et al., 2009) and status consumption helps achieve that motive (Eng & Bogaert, 2010). The purpose of luxury is not limited to the consumption of brands or goods alone, it is a road to create social relationships as well (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Luxury is a consequence of social stratification and it is used by the affluent to cement their status (Kastanakis & Balabanis, 2012).

Consumption or possession of prestige markers help convey an individual's status (Eisenstadt, 1968) which means that when consumers indulge in status consumption, they achieve social prestige. To exploit this innate desire of consumers for "social status" and "prestige" luxury marketers ensured obvious brand logo display on goods such as handbags, clothing, shoes among others. So, this exhibition of brands become an overpowering symbolism associated with high living (Twitchell, 2001). High priced products that are consumed in the public domain are also considered as indicators of prestige (Lichtenstein et al., 1993) and the high price gratifies one's ego as well (Eastman et al., 1997). Luxury is many-a-times associated with prestige; and prestige has many perceived values which may be related to price, uniqueness, social, and emotional appeal, quality or price (Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Possession of prestige brands enables individuals to affiliate with an aspirational group or differentiate themselves from the rest (Dittmar, 1994). Literature is rife with examples of people making judgements about others based on their belongings (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004; Solomon, 1983); an example would be luxury clothing brands enhancing consumer image in society (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011) or women's cosmetic purchases being driven by a want for status (Chao & Schor, 1998). Luxury has a symbolic value that corresponds to an identity of success and wealth (Eng & Bogaert, 2010), and those who value status may be influenced by this luxury brand image (O'Cass & Frost, 2002).

In the Indian context, there is evidence of status consumption based on a study of wedding expenditures in rural Karnataka (Bloch et al., 2004). A study by Nobel Laureate Abhijeet Banerjee reports that extremely poor households in Udaipur spent 10% percent of their annual budget on festivities, which ideally could have been diverted to fulfil more of their basic necessities such as food (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006). The researchers also add that 99% of the extremely poor spent more on weddings and religious festivals (compared to the previous year). So, what is it that makes the poor spend more on entertainment than food? Keeping up with the Joneses seems to be the answer (Banerjee & Duflo, 2006).

Hence, there exists substantiated evidence of status spending transcending income classes. But what constitutes as status markers vary based on income class. There is evidence in research where an Indian washerman felt the need to reduce milk consumption for his children in order to afford a television set, which was imperative for social acceptability among his relatives (Singh, 2011). So, there is a tendency to emulate an upper-class lifestyle at the cost of basic necessities and that drives the consumer culture as well.

2.5.0 Luxury: An Experience

Studies conclude that luxury consumption can be to gratify the self and it can be subtle (Bauer et al., 2011) and it provides a sensory gratification that is unsurpassed by any other kind of non-hedonic product (Gistri et al., 2009). Some argue that luxury need not be only a product or a service but can also be viewed as an experience (Dubois & Czellar, 2002). There is the experiential luxury concept of *Wabi Sabi*, that is to enjoy the ephemeral, such as a bottle of a vintage Bordeux wine (Berthon et al., 2009). Atwal and Williams (2009) theorized that consumers experience different levels of involvement and intensity based on the type of luxury experience. They identify four zones of the luxury brand experience such as educational, entertainment, aesthetic, and escapist. An example of escapist experience would be luxury travel where the involvement and intensity would be high (Atwal & Williams, 2009). Such a consumer may be a connoisseur of high-end luxury hotels and wanting to enjoy the delicate experience of Michelin rated restaurants and willing to pay the price for it. Leisure travel is one of the avenues, where the consumer can customize a holiday in accordance to their self-concept and can display this consumption through social media to reference groups (Bronner & Hoog, 2018). Social media is the medium that is used to exhibit private consumption to the target audience. So, a discerning luxury consumer may be interested in spending a fortune for front seats of a music concert or a luxury bath oil or a visit to the Aurora Borealis. While all of these remain accessible to the luxury consumer and one may be able to talk about it or post a picture on social media, its consumption remains a unique and private experience.

The experiential dimension of a luxury brand deals with feelings and behavioural responses that respond to the brand identity and image (Berthon et al., 2009). The consumer experience while purchasing or consuming the luxury brand creates value for the luxury (Atwal & Williams, 2009). An example of this would be the unpacking experience of a jewellery box

with a satin ribbon on the outside and a customised note on the inside. This is understood as a possession ritual (McCracken, 1986) (Bauer et al., 2011) that adds value to the consumption experience. The purchase experience of a luxury product is multi-sensory and personalized; the possession ritual is generally elaborate and considered vital in the consumption process.

An aspect to consider is that a consumer's purchase involvement is dependent on the purchase situation (store ambience, frequency), the consumption occasion (special occasions, quotidian) (Mittal, 1989), and the product-category (luxury or utilitarian) (Bruwer & Huang, 2012). Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) point towards a "symbolic violence", that is tacit and legitimate but unconscious and the agent employing it and receiving it accept it as the norm; and this naturalised obedience is a form of submission that reinforces the class differentials.
Juxtaposing the same theory on to an in-store experience, many novice luxury customers may be intimidated by the "symbolic violence" they experience through the store ambience or size, merchandize display, ambient music or a price on request feature or an elitist staff and the customer might feel a loss of "social legitimacy" in the store (Dion & Borraz, 2017) and might self-exclude themselves.

2.6.0 Luxury Brands: The Phenomenon of trading up

Consumers exhibit attitudinal differences towards luxury brands based on their country (Dubois et al., 2005). Consumers may show an elitist, democratic, or distant attitude towards luxury, and each country may exhibit one or more of these attitudes in different permutations (Dubois et al., 2005). Research finds that middle class customers perceive luxury as a recompense for achievement (Silverstein & Fiske, 2008) whereas affluent consumers use luxury to signal status (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988). Every market space has an inherent need and to address this, organizations have segmented luxury brands innovatively. Alleres (1990) segregates luxury into three levels, the lowest being the accessible luxury available for the masses, the middle level is the intermediate luxury that is within reach of the professional class and the top position is occupied by the inaccessible luxury which are both high in price and prestige and available only to the select elite class. Inaccessible luxury also tends to bespoke (Renand, 1993).

2.6.1 Brand Segments

Luxury brands are generally categorised as Old luxury and New luxury. Old luxury goods are priced in such a way that only the top earning 1–2% of the people can afford them. They are elitist in that way and are meant for a certain class (Silverstein & Fiske, 2008). Their prices are based on a strategy to be hugely profitable even with limited distribution, hence the margins on such products are high. One of the features of an old luxury product is that it is manufactured in its place of origin (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009) so it can be marketed as crafted with the essence of its birth place. Many consumers with high involvement in the purchase process of products such as wine value the country-of-origin tag to make a decision (Bruwer & Buller, 2013).

New Luxury brands on the other hand appeal to a set of values, so consumers from different social classes with the same set of values may consume similar products. Consumers also enjoy a certain emotional engagement with new luxury goods (Silverstein & Fiske, 2008). Silverstein and Fiske (2008) separated New luxury into three main categories namely 1) Masstige (a portmanteau of “mass” and “prestige”) 2) Accessible Super Premium 3) Old luxury brand extensions.

In the past, only the affluent had access to luxury and that helped signal their status (Grossman & Shapiro, 1988) but with time the “democratization of luxury” (Evrard & Roux, 2005) occurred with brands coming up with masstige products that combined perceived prestige with affordable pricing that catered to the rising less affluent shoppers with disposable incomes (Truong et al., 2009). Luxury goods in this brand segment are priced lower than super premium or old luxury, but carry a premium when compared to the conventional goods in their category (Silverstein & Fiske, 2008). These goods fulfill the gap for the aspirational consumers who are looking to trade up from the conventional brands or goods or in other words looking for “mass prestige”. Accessible Super Premium products are low ticket items, which are affordable to mid-segment consumers, even if they are priced very close to the top of their category and may be considered expensive (Silverstein & Fiske, 2008).

Old Luxury brand extensions are economically judicious forms of the brands that have been predominantly purchased by (top 1–2%) affluent income classes only. An example of this would be the BMW X1 with an entry price of Rs. 35 lacs which is an entry level version of the

aspirational BMW X5 or X7 which is upwards of Rs. 55 lacs. So, BMW has extended its old brand in such a way that it is aspirational and economically viable for those who may want to enjoy the status associated with the brand.

2.7.0 The Value Perception of Luxury

The concept of perceived value of luxury is based on what the consumer feels about the perceived quality or conspicuousness, how it affects the perceived uniqueness or self-concept of the consumer including perceived hedonism (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). So, there is a real value to the luxury which may be defined in financial terms, one can put a number on it. Furthermore, there is a perceived value which means it may appear to be expensive based on its limited supply, craftsmanship, or its brand persona. The conceptual model of luxury consumption is simplified by consumer perceptions on social, individual, functional, and financial drivers of luxury by Wiedmann et al. (2007). Each of these drivers have a set of questions, whose responses vary based on culture and nationality. This measurement scale draws from the research work of Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and Bourdieu's capital theory (1986) and they have tried to present a singular, unified model that measures different drivers of luxury. The model introduced by Wiedmann et al. (2007) defined four main dimensions of luxury value namely: 1) financial 2) functional 3) individual 4) social. According to this model, the financial value deals with price, discounts, and such. The functional value deals with utilitarianism, quality and exclusivity, the individual value deals with self-concept, hedonism, and materialism while the social value deals with conspicuousness and prestige. Hennigs et al. (2012) expounded the antecedent constructs of these values with their corresponding variables and empirically tested them.

2.7.1 New Value dimensions of Luxury

This model has been expanded with an addition of three dimensions so that, it could be not only culturally representative but also relevant to India. These dimensions are *economic culture value, symbolic value,* and *experiential value.*

Economic Culture can be defined as an amalgamation of beliefs, values, and expectations that help an individual choose the possessions that help him maintain his social class (Liu, 2013).

Economic Culture value dictates how individuals spend and save. It also assigns value to the products and commodities under consideration. Each of these have to be viewed with the prism of social space in which it operates. India has an economic culture of savings, large part of the present middle-aged population grew up middle class, looking for discounts and value for money; this construct tries to measure the impact of that economic culture on luxury consumption. This dimension evaluates the attitude towards luxury whether one considers it a wasteful expenditure or an investment for the future. It also evaluates the type of financial decision making in case of luxury whether it a decision taken independently or collectively as a family unit. Even in case of nuclear families the gender perceptions can become evident because working women in India form a small percentage and they may not be able to make independent financial decisions relating to luxury.

The *symbolic value* focuses on exhibitionism by conspicuous consumption and use of social media, to indicate wealth, authority, or status to the peer group (Veblen,1899/1994). It would be sacrilegious to ignore the role of social media as a luxury influencer and endorser or its ability to help exhibit social class and upward mobility. What is the motivation that induces consumers to exhibit their purchases or experiences in a public space? Towards what goal does this action work? This value tries to measure the perceptions of luxury associated with symbolism. This value has to be understood as separate from hedonism, as that motivates a consumer to purchase but this goes one step further. The consumption is complete only if it is exhibited in a public space and the consumption or experience is enhanced after the completion of the said activity.

The third, *experiential value* is deduced from the view that luxury is more than a product; it is an experience (Berthon et al., 2009). Sherry (1998) talks about the subliminal influence of atmospherics and in-store service experience on the purchase decision and the experiential value tries to measure the same. For this research, experiential value deals with the pre-purchase experience and tries to measure its influence on the purchase decision.

2.8.0 Gender and Luxury Consumption

Gender is a learned construct borne out of societal beliefs (West & Zimmerman, 1987), learned behaviors and conditioning that leads to internalized beliefs in congruence with the world around them (Risman & Davis, 2013).

Marketers dealing with consumer behavior have considered various schools of thought that deal with the impact of gender on luxury consumption. Post-Modernism considers gender to be a cultural construct with a frame of what it means to be a man or a woman; so those who conform to this view disregard gender as a decisive variable because of its illegitimate design (Kesari & Srivastava, 2012). Liberal feminism considers gender to be a consequence of social inequalities rather than biology, and the third view recognizes the inherent differences between the gender experiences and finds them to be expressly linked to consumer behavior (Kesari & Srivastava, 2012). These gender constructs lead to stereotyping behaviors to achieve gender homogeneity (Ridgeway & Corell, 2004). Consumers levitate towards products that reinforce their gender identity and bring a symmetry between their values and expectations (Bourdieu, 2001).

2.9.0 Social Stratification: A Historical Perspective

Social Stratification has existed in some form since the birth of man. In the early days, brute force, access to food and water, and later domesticated cattle gave men a higher order in the rudimentary social structure. As civilization evolved, a more sophisticated form of social division was put in place based on owned resources such as land and cattle or occupational skills; this progressed to divisions based on income, education, occupation, and such. Social stratification is thus a hierarchical system based on resources and skills that maybe considered valuable in a society (Beeghley, 2000). Differences in authority or a power gap gives rise to conflict groups (Dahrendorf, 1959) so it is one of the reasons for the formation of class divisions. Yitzhaki and Lerman (1982) note that the extent of deprivation is related to the societal stratification such that, deeper the stratification more the inequalities.

2.9.1 Marx, Weber, and Bourdieu

Karl Marx (1887) spearheaded an ideology that later came to be known as Marxism, which spoke about the class conflict that arose between *Bourgeoisie* (the ruling class) and the *Proletariat* (the working class) as a consequence of Capitalism. Marx posited that the

Proletariat controlled the *means of production* and the *Bourgeoisie* engaged in manual labor to produce these goods. Marx also acknowledged the presence of the *petit bourgeoisie* or the pseudo-middle class and theorized that if capitalism were to continue, most of the *petit bourgeoisie* would get consumed into the *Proletariat* and the *Bourgeoisie* would not have many takers (Marx & Engels, 1992). In his book, *The Communist Manifesto* Marx talks about a classless society, where the state has the ownership of production and all the citizens would have equal part in it (Mark & Engels, 1992). The basis of this thought was that class struggles are the genesis of all exploitation and inequality; and classlessness is the only way forward for the *Proletariat* to enjoy an equal life. Marx understood social class as SES (socio-economic status) measured through education, occupation, and income alone and that was one of the first objective constructs of this concept. A critique of Marx's theory was that it had limited scope of upward mobility for those trapped in the lower echelons and classlessness via communism was postulated as the only way out.

Max Weber defined the separations in *class, status,* and *party*; the first division is based on economic order, second based on social order and the third division is based on the political order (Best, 2005). Weber believed that if an individuals' market value (skills or education) increased in line with the market demands then upward mobility was a possibility (Cook & Lawson, 2016), and this was more flexible as compared to his predecessor's inferences. Weber's construct of social class was based on SES as well and considered only income, occupation, and education as its measures and in that way, it was in line with Karl Marx. The construct of social status is well expressed by occupation (Weber, 1925/1947). Even though Weber gave the dream of upward mobility, he acknowledged that it may not always be possible to enter higher groups by increasing your market value (Weber, 2008) and some families might experience no mobility to due to deep seated inequalities of caste or class (Bradbury & Katz, 2002).

Sorokin (1927) observed "In any organized society, it is not possible to have complete equality, in fact history is proof that an unstratified society has never existed" (p.12,13). Classlessness is a utopian concept because it disregards the idea of free enterprise; and the human desire to acquire upward social mobility through "social", "cultural", or "economic capital" (Bourdieu, 1986). Bourdieu (2008) talked about socially conditioned tastes, a consequence of lineage and upbringing, a skill one acquires not only because of birth but also through culture and lifestyles. Bourdieu's social class definitions were based on SES indicators only, but he introduced the

concept of social groups based on tastes, preferences, and lifestyles. Bourdieu (1984) posited that taste is the source through which one categorizes oneself and is categorized by others. He referred to “pure taste” or “highbrow culture” that was found in the dominant class with the greatest educational capital, “middle-brow” taste associated with less treasured items and “vulgar taste” represented all that is so popular that it is not a taste itself. Bourdieu (1984) also demarcates “dispositions” of culture associated with the dominant class as “sense of distinction”, and that with the middle-class as “cultural goodwill” and the lower class as “necessary choice”. Bourdieu (1990a) also observed that the pursuit of good taste is a symbolic pursuit of power.

Grusky (2001a, p.3) observes, “the task of contemporary stratification research is to describe the contours and distribution of inequality and to explain its persistence despite modern egalitarian or anti-stratification values”.

2.10.0 Caste

An understanding of social stratification is incomplete without the mention of its most rigid and oldest forms--Caste.

Caste in India is based on a ranking system of ethnic purity, wealth, and resources with a set of rules that make for rigid entry and exit (primarily through the coincidence of birth) and an ideology that gives justification and thereby a legitimacy to this inequality (Grusky, 2001b). Caste or *Jati* is primarily perpetuated through endogamy (intra-caste marriage) (Inversen, 2012) and works contrary to the values of equality and liberty (Dumont,1970). Many proponents of the Hindu order view caste as a division of labor; in practice it remains a “division of labourers” (Ambedkar, 2014, chapter 4, para IV). Casteism should not be equated with racism because “Caste system is the social division of people of the same race” (Ambedkar, 2014, chapter 4, para V). The believers of caste system relied on eugenics as a justification, that is a promotion of endogamy to create a pure, genetically superior line; however, in the face of scientific rigor this argument did not hold much water (Ambedkar, 2014).

Caste has an influence on the social hierarchy; its ability to bequeath privilege or take it away, in the Indian context, because its predecessor the *Varna* has been prevalent since the ancient period (Ahuja Ram, 1993). The social order defined by the Varna system was based on occupational superiority, Priests (*Brahmins*) at the top followed by the Warriors (*Kshtriyas*), traders (*Vaishyas*) third and last were the manual workers (*Shudras*) (Inverson, 2012). There were also the "untouchables" or Dalits who fell into the sub-category *(ati- shudra*) of manual workers, outside the gambit of caste and were engaged in undignified work (Inversen, 2012) such as manual scavenging. Caste is a consequence of lineage, perpetual and rigid by design and based on the belief of pure and impure (Sharma, 1984). Owing to its rigid nature, mobility was limited between different castes (Sharma, 1984). This construct of purity helped create and maintain the distinctions of caste; in terms of inter-dining habits such as not consuming food prepared by lower castes, or not sharing a table with inappropriate caste identities (Inversen, 2012).

The only way the caste of a generation could change was through inter-caste marriage; where the offspring inherits the father's caste, but that was also a difficult occurrence subject to societal norms and family acceptance. In the present day, caste does not necessarily define one's occupation but for the purposes marriage it still yields an iron grip (Ghurye, 1961). The perpetuity of the symbolic power yielded by an upper caste was a consequence of the economic, social, and cultural capital that was borne of the privileges bestowed by the caste structure (Vikas et al., 2015). One implication of this structure was the *Jajmani* that was a feature of the socio-economic order prevalent in northern India (Wiser, 1988). The *Jajman* or patron would be an upper caste landowner or a *zamindar* who employed and provided remuneration as per their will to the lower castes who served them (Vikas et al., 2015). The fallout of the moral economy of the *Jajmani* system was oppression, cruelty, and subjugation (Dirks, 2012).

2.10.1 The Paradox of Conspicuous Consumption

An empirical conclusion was drawn by Vikas et al. (2015) on the consumption of paraphernalia and idols during *Chath Puja* festivities by lower castes (in a north Indian village), as being distasteful, tacky, or lacking refinement by the upper castes; while the lower castes considered their conspicuous choices a challenge to the caste hierarchy and viewed it as "exhibitions of symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 1990b, p.119). He also noted that the old upper caste elites viewed

these new consumption practices such as use of expensive saris, ornaments or make-up by lower castes as immoral and unrefined. This view has been supported in older research where a lower caste but higher income resident of an Indian village, refuses to engage in conspicuous consumption to avoid moral aspersions and envy of those above and below him in the social hierarchy (Gell, 1986).

This rise of status consumption was the result of newly acquired economic freedom, progress, and mobility of the lower castes; a result of government policies on affirmative action in the education and employment sector. In a recent interview, Prof. Teltumbde says that castes can be incorporated into a class, only if the former is viewed from a Marxist standpoint, that is, their association with the means of production, because castes are large in number and otherwise difficult to categorize (Caste in India- Evolution and Manifestation- An Interview with Prof Anand Teltumbde, 2016). So, what is the influence of the orthodox social order of caste and its intersectionality with class in the purchase motivations of luxury? It is a social segregator and it does have a relationship with status consumption. It remains to be seen if it can be extended to the luxury consumption space.

Western researchers understood class as a modern representation for meritocracy because the rank within a class structure was fluid and could be earned, unlike a caste. Ideally, one can consider religion as well, especially in a diverse country that is India, but it is a complex subject and warrants a separate discussion, so we choose to exclude it for the purpose of this research.

2.11.0 Social Class

Social class is a ranking system that positions an individual in the social hierarchy based on income, education, and occupational prestige (Oakes & Rossi, 2003). Social class also determines community exposure, interaction, and belonging (Lareau & Conley, 2008). Social class is seminal in the development of learned skills such as behavior and culture that individuals imbibe based on their socio-economic background and prescribe to responses that are class congruent (Fiske & Markus, 2012). Social class seems to influence many decisions that individuals make daily such as food choices (Monsivais & Drewnowski, 2009), an appreciation of art or music (Van Eijck, 2001), attire (Gillath et al., 2012) and lifestyle. The sorting of people based on class exists in many facets of society, a simple example would be a segregation of residential areas based on class (Desmond, 2016).

The common practice to grade class is a *prestige scale* which measures occupational stature or a *socioeconomic scale* that measures occupation, income, and education (Grusky, 2001b). Karl Marx's theory is also reductionist in the sense that it considered SES (socio-economic status) alone as an indicator of social class (Grusky, 2001b). This approach was unable to capture the variations in the worldviews of the individual within the class (Fouad & Brown, 2001). The existing groupings of social class in research cannot be generalized because they are unique to the research at hand and cannot be replicated by others (Liu, 2012). The socio-demographic status of an individual should not be confused with social class because it disregards factors such as power, privilege, class differences (Liu et al., 2007) or for that matter lifestyle.

The class symbols used to indicate social standing within a nation/group are unique to every culture and dependent on the accumulation of resources and capital considered to be of value within their social context and these resources are inclusive of behaviors, attitudes, or values. (Liu et al., 2004). So, a class exists within the context of an economic subculture with an understanding of the valued class symbols (property relationships, education, material possessions, tastes, and preferences) and an awareness of one's position in the class structure also termed as "Classism Consciousness" (Liu, 2012). A microculture is inclusive of but not limited to the customs, values, and traditions of the neighborhood or community in which it exists (Liu et al., 2004). The structure of social class identity also stems from beliefs, values, and attitudes (Centers, 1949) and that directs a consumer about what is considered of value to uphold one's social class (Liu, 2013). In a social context, there exists a sense of economic comparison that occurs between people (Festinger, 1954), where they draw conclusions about each other's social standing by rapidly gathering information (Kraus et al., 2017) about appearance, language, behavior, and material possessions. Upward mobility symbolism is associated with this awareness of the valued resources of each class.

2.11.1 The Social Class WorldView Model (SCWM)

The Social Class WorldView Model (SCWM) (Liu, 2001; Liu & Arguello, 2007) proposes a broad schema to understand social class implications on individuals. The first component of this study deals with economic culture and makes the following assumptions: (i) Individuals are motivated to conform to their peer group through "behaviors, attitudes, and resources" and that helps them achieve homeostasis (ii) Individuals try to find their "social class position and status" within the confines of their economic culture. The definitions and expectations of

valued capital or resources (e.g., education, physical attributes, property ownership) differ within an economic culture. The accumulated capital to aspire for can be cultural, social, or human in the SCWM. Liu (2013) observes that human capital encompasses the inborn physical characteristics and capabilities such as body size or attractiveness, social capital is the "social networks and interpersonal connections" and cultural capital deals with the aesthetics that one develops to conform to a social class or expressly display it.

The second part of the SCWM model deals with the worldview of individuals that form based on "socialization" messages received from their immediate family, peer group, and aspirational groups (Liu, 2012) and get manifested as "a pattern of beliefs, behaviors, and perceptions" (Watts,1994). These worldviews also comprise of "materialistic attitudes, social class-congruent behaviours and lifestyle" (Liu, 2012). The third aspect of this model deals with the justification (through behavior) that buttresses the gathering of valued resources and capital within the economic culture, termed as Classism (Liu et al., 2004).

Now, the SCWM (Liu, 2001) (Liu et al., 2004) has been divided into five domains and each of these has an impact on the decision and behavioral choices of individuals. The domains are as follows:

(i) *Consciousness, Attitudes, and Salience*: The *Consciousness* represents the awareness of the class position and its presence in the life of the individual, *Attitudes* are inclusive of the values, beliefs, and feelings that are related to social class behaviors (Hill, 1992) and salience represents the degree of importance of social class in an individuals' life.

(ii) *Referent Groups*: Individuals have various influences that shape their attitudes, behaviors, and perspectives. These influences include the "*class of origin"* or family influences in development of social aspirations, culture, and behaviors. The second is *peer group* that guide an individual about what may be acceptable or necessary to be congruent to a class. The third is the "*group of aspiration"* that an individual wants to belong to and tries to seek the resources and behaviors that enable an entry into that group.

(iii) *Property Relationships*: This domain deals with the use of material objects used to express one's class position or as status indicators.

(iv) *Lifestyle*: Here lifestyle is understood as the way people expend their leisure time and resources to express themselves within the confines of economic culture.

(v) *Behaviors*: Individuals accumulate a set of learned skills that help them navigate the society with class congruent behaviours.

To paraphrase the variables considered for the construct of social class under this model are lifestyle, parental demographics (economic culture), class identity (values and beliefs), status and prestige, class consciousness and that maybe expressed with upward mobility symbolism. There are a two more variables that can be taken under deliberation; *Self-Concept and Social Class Identity Dissonance (SCID)* and they find their place in research literature as we will see further.

2.11.2 An Economic Subclass: Income

An income class should be understood as separate from social class, since the previous is a singular concept and the latter has a multitude of variables. The modest class-income correlation of 0.4 is one of the reasons why a change in economic status does not bring a shift in social class (Coleman, 1983). Social class is a better segmentation indicator than income class because it is able to point the variations in lifestyle (Myers & Guttman, 1974) including but not limited to store preferences (Levy, 1966). Social class is a better predictor of consumer behaviour better than income (Martineau, 1958) because of the multitude of variables associated with social class. Occupational status (socio-economic indicator) has more of an impact on the family budgets as compared to income (Wasson, 1969) and is one of the reasons why it is a better segmentation base. While both are important variables, it is of consequence to use either on both these variables depending on the category or class of products (Hisrich & Peters, 1974). The purpose of conspicuous consumption (with associated symbolism) is better served by social class (as a segment base) as it is tied to the exhibition of status and class membership (Coleman, 1960). Schaninger (1981) proposed that both income and social class must be used for products that serve as status symbols within a class, have a high visibility factor and are expensive. For non-essential, low-ticket items that are inconspicuous such as

ice-cream, chocolates, or sugary drinks income alone determines the purchase frequency (Coleman, 1960) (Zaltman & Wallendorf, 1979).

Gilbert and Kahl (1982) proposed a model to segregate the American Class structure based primarily on asset ownership and occupational stature while prestige, status, and values were considered as secondary influencers. Under the *New Synthesis Model* proposed by them, the class structure was divided as follows:

1. *The Capitalist class* or the most affluent forming the top 1% of society and controlling half of the nations' wealth and the distinctive feature of this class is the "ownership of income producing assets" (Coleman, 1983)

2. *The Upper Middle Class* is identified by its educational capital enabling them to have professional and/or managerial skill-based occupations.

3. *The Middle Class* is primarily engaged in white collar jobs, enjoy job security, and do not have a job role that requires repetitious work.

4. *The Working Class* are blue-collar workers who have a basic living standard that distinguishes them from the poor.

5. *The Working Poor* find work in the labor market, do not have a steady flow of income but are scraping by.

6. *The Underclass* are those that live by illegal means or on government aid.

2.11.2.1 Income classes in India

In India, the population is segregated based on household income to understand consumption and spend on various products and services. For this research four income brackets have been considered as follows:

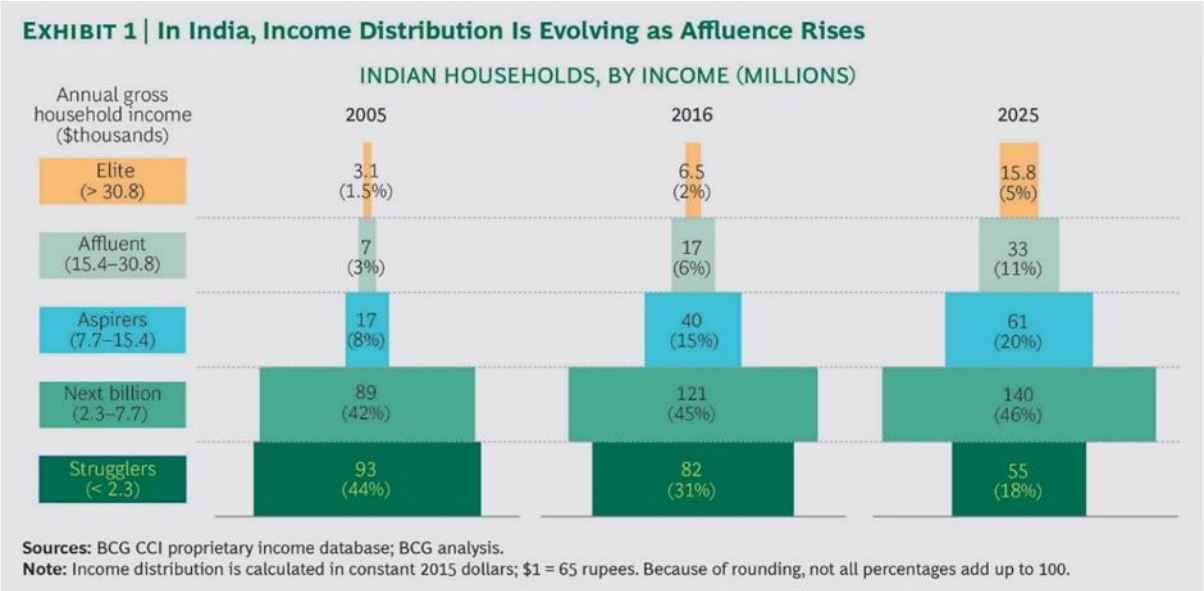
(i) Lower-income household: Rs. 1,50,000–Rs. 5,50,000
(ii) Middle-income household: Rs. 5,50,000–Rs. 11,00,000

(iii) Upper-income household: Rs. 11,00,000–Rs. 22,00,000

(iv) Affluent household: >Rs. 22,00,000

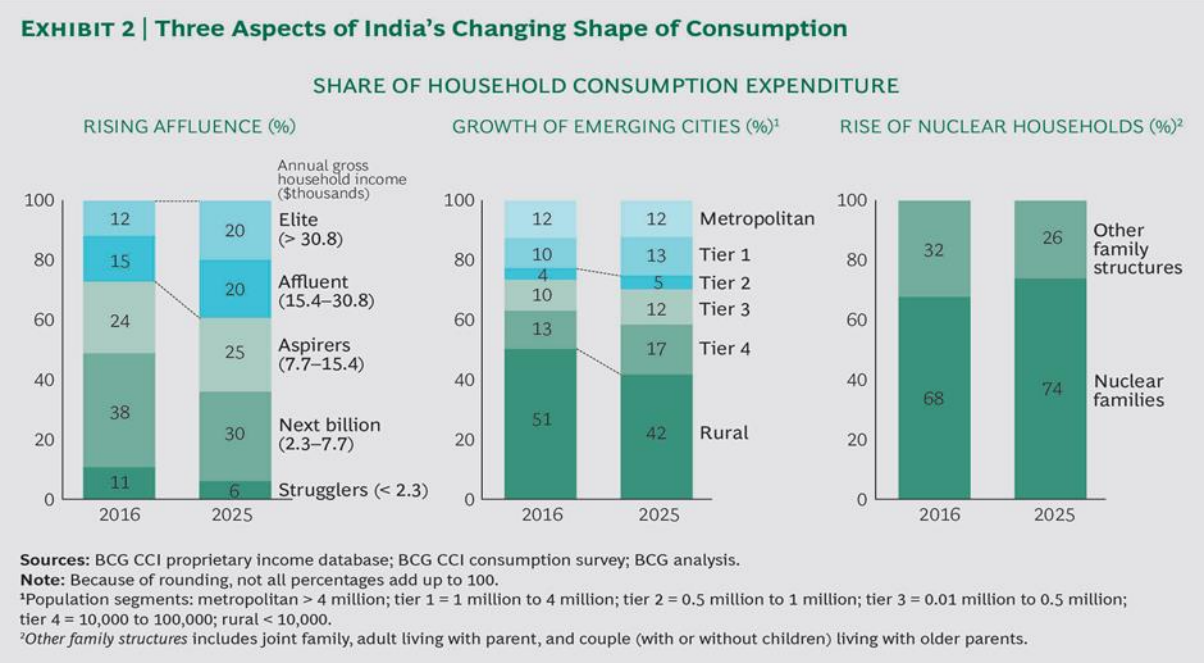
These intervals are based on the annual household income brackets of India (2010–2025) report published by Statista Research Department (2020). The below Graph 1(a) and 1(b) of the Boston Consulting Group forecast an increase from 8% to 16% of the Elite and affluent households in the period between 2016 and 2025 and this segment will account for one third of the consumption (Singhi & Singhi, 2017). This report made some empirical deductions as follows: (i) consumers in B-class (emerging) cities look at value for money, are tied to their local culture and their economic outlook is risk-averse; (ii) 70% of Indian households are nuclear and devote 30% more finances (to spending) as compared to joint families; (iii) consumption patterns of these nuclear households are driven by their lifestyle needs.

Figure 2. 1 Annual Household Income in India 2016



Source:https://www.bcg.com/en-in/publications/2017/marketing-sales-globalization-new-indian-changing-consumer.aspx

Figure 2. 2 Household consumption expenditure based on annual income 2016



Source:https://www.bcg.com/en-in/publications/2017/marketing-sales-globalization-new-indian-changing-consumer.aspx

2.11.3 Parental demographics and spousal contribution

An individual's upbringing significantly affects the formation of attitudes, behaviors, lifestyle, and economic culture. An individuals' social class is dependent on his parental demographics, so it is an inherited state of being (Sorokin, 1927). Family culture is also an inherited phenomenon and is pivotal in the attainment of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The acquisition of culture capital through development of "taste" not only has a lot to do with upbringing but parental demographics as well. It also depends on quality education that only parents with a certain economic capital can provide. One can acquire cultural capital through possession of art and books or learning to appreciate a musical symphony (Huang, 2019). The common thread running through any of these acquisitions is the social stature and economic standing of the family at large because neither the possession of these objects (referred to as the *objectified state of cultural capital* by Bourdieu (1986)) nor the cultivation of these tastes are conceivable without the leisure of money (Huang, 2019). Children learn social values from the community that surrounds them; which may prove to be instrumental or detrimental to their future occupational success and the introduction to these communities is greatly dependent on the occupational stature of the parents (Kohn, 1969). Coleman (1983) proposed that a woman's contribution to a family social standing must be accounted for and measured. A woman can

through her education, professional status, cultural affiliations, and peer relationships sustain or improve a family's social class or bring a "one-class difference" in the social status (Coleman & Neugarten, 1971).

2.11.4 Class Identity: Values & Beliefs

Values have been a good starting point to explain various behavioural singularities including purchase intentions (Henry, 1976), they provide a roadmap for socially acceptable behavior and they justify our beliefs and attitudes and they find their beginnings in culture and societal institutions (Rokeach, 1973).

A social class, no matter how diverse is bound by a common belief and value system (Leondar-Wright, 2005). These values and beliefs are formed in childhood based on the parental demographics and community exposure (Olson, 2011). Every class has its set norms and ideals, beliefs and way of life, values and preferences that represent its identity; an individual must conform to those in order to be accepted within the class. It is important to consider values as an indicator of class because one may be in a very high-income category but may hold "middle-class" values related to money, may live frugally, may enjoy discounts, or seek out value for money products. So, it is important to consider social class as a grouping where people have congruence of values, beliefs, or way of living (Olson, 2011).

Kahle (1983) found similarities in the attitudes, purchase behavior and beliefs of those in the same value segment. He created the List of Values (LOV) to measure the impact of values on consumer behaviour. The LOV has nine core values such as self-respect, security, warm relationships with others, self- fulfilment, a sense of accomplishment, being respected, a sense of belonging, fun and enjoyment, and excitement (Kahle & Kennedy,1989) and the respondent ranks the most important value in his daily life. This "dominant value" establishes a "value segment" which helps draw correlations with other variables (Beatty et al., 1989) (Kahle et al., 1986). The LOV draws from and simplifies the works of Maslow (1954) and Rokeach's (1973) value survey (RVS) but unlike the RVS, the LOV does not give a definition to each of the values and leaves the understanding open to respondents' interpretation. The LOV deals with Terminal values only, that is, the goals that people want to achieve ultimately (Katalin & Ágnes, 2013).

2.11.5 Social mobility and salience

Argyle (1994) defined social mobility as a movement between classes, either upward or downward from its class of origin. The movement of an individual higher in the class structure is termed as upward mobility and the reverse is called downward mobility. There is sometimes a lateral shift as well, when an individual changes profession; that maybe different in profile but equal in pay and respect.

There is a renegotiation of self-identity when an individual experiences upward mobility (Aries & Seider, 2007) and the significance of social class remains vital to identity examination and expression (Jones, 2003). Upward mobility also initiates a change in tastes and preferences in an individual (Stewart & Ostrove, 1993) who may want to tangibly express his newly acquired place in the class structure. So, the next obvious question is what brings about a change in social class, is it income alone or are there other indicators? Coleman (1983) observed that when individuals from a household join the workforce it hardly ever brings about a change in social class because these new members have equal or lower occupational stature than the primary earner. A change in the occupational stature (that maybe a consequence of erudition, opportunity, or industry) is followed by a change in the peer group, place of residence, and consumption practices or lifestyle choices and that is what brings about a shift in the social class hierarchy (Coleman, 1983). Hence, upward mobility can be achieved through higher education or a high-paying respectable occupation or marriage with an individual from a higher class (Ross, 1995). Upward mobility is aspired for because it comes with a slew of benefits such as improved status, opportunities for cultural affiliations and more money.

One can experience downward mobility as well, generally unplanned, due to an economic downturn (job loss) or change in profession (Ross, 1995). For a movement to the next higher class an awareness of its norms, behaviors, values, and culture is important so as to maintain a congruence with that environment (Liu, 2012). This is where status consumption comes into play; and it is a skill to be learnt, to be aware of that enable an individual to convey upward mobility through these consumption choices (Fisher, 1987).

This leads us to the concept of *upward mobility symbolism,* a form of *social class signaling*; that is an emulation of behaviors or consumption of markers/symbols that signify a person's position in the class structure. There is evidence in research about an individual's capabilities

being judged positively by others due to the use of *upward mobility symbolism* (Fiske et. al., 2002). This symbolism also depends on the *saliency* of social class in the individual's life. *Salience* means the importance and meaning of social class in the individuals' life (Liu, 2001). If the individual finds value in the social class structure they may engage in displays through purchases of branded clothing, shoes, cars, or a bigger house to clearly exhibit their upward mobility. They try to bring about a congruency between the symbols of upward mobility and the social class position. When an equilibrium is reached through this *symbolism or signaling;* between the individual and the aspirational group, they find peer acceptance.

2.11.6 Self-concept

Self- Concept deals with an individuals' sense of self, about "who they are?" and "how they would like to be seen?" Self-Concept is a learning mechanism based on mental concepts that help ascertain and maintain one's self-worth (Oyserman & Markus, 1998). Self-Concept is also dependent on demographic information such as race, gender, physical appearance, or age (Oyserman et al., 2012) and these variables will have an impact on the choices and decisions of individuals (Oyserman et al., 2007). It is also prudent to note that one may have several views of looking at oneself, in the present, in the future or through the eyes of others and all these representations of self, give a structure to the schema of self- concept (Oyserman et al., 2012). Individuals tend to construct their self-concept/ self-identity based not only on their demographics but also their culture, social rank, and peer opinion reinforcement; and they communicate these identities by socially congruent behaviours (Oyserman et al., 2012).

The dimensions of *self-concept* as explained by Jamal and Goode (2001) are as follows: (1) Actual Self; (2) Ideal Self; (3) Social Self; (4) Ideal Social Self. The *Actual Self* is defined as how one sees oneself and the *Ideal Self* is referred to as "how one would like to see oneself" also referred to as "desired self" (Abdallat, 2014). *Social Self* is referred to as "how others perceive oneself" or "what kind of image one gives to others/peers/society". *Ideal Social Self* deals with the "how one would like to be perceived by others". It is not that each of these self-images exist in isolation for it is very much plausible for them to co-exist (Higgins, 1987).
One more aspect associated with luxury consumption are feelings of guilt associated with over spending or spending on items that may seem frivolous. Lin and Xia (2009) found various emotional constructs associated with the concept of guilt such as fear, self-blame, regret,

reluctance to spend, hesitation, and scruple. This reluctance to spend or regret maybe associated with income- incongruity or class incongruity.

A comparison between lower-SES and upper-SES individuals reveals that the former face resource constraints and as a consequence do not enjoy the freedom to explore their interests (Kraus et al., 2009). These differences in resource availability and opportunities for growth create different social and emotional outlooks for the said individuals. This translates into the upper-SES individuals being more inner-directed, believe in their individuality and their ability to control the external while the lower-SES individuals create a worldview of conformity, adjustment, and compromise (Argyle, 1994). In the context of consumer behavior, it was observed that lower-SES consumers were affected by the opinion of others while upper-SES consumers remained indifferent (Na et al., 2016). In similar studies, it was noted that lower - SES consumer choices were motivated by conformity while that of upper-SES consumers was driven by differentiation (Stephens et al., 2007). Material possessions enable individuals to define, explore and augment their self-concept (Zinkham & Hong, 1991). Infact, others are also defined on the basis of material ownership (O'Cass & McEwen, 2006). Consumers seek brands that are a reflection of their identities and tend to search for harmony with others who choose a similar brand (Sirgy,1982). Empirical evidence thus points that consumer consumption choices are a means of self-expression based on self-concept (Nam et al., 2016; Roy & Rabbanee, 2015) and when there is a match between what the product/brand represents and how the consumer views themself, then there is self-concept congruency (Hosany & Martin, 2012) (Grubb & Grathwohl,1967). The positioning of a brand speaks to this desire to attain self-image congruency and the consumer leans towards those (Ericksen, 1996).
This self-concept congruency is vital in high involvement, conspicuous products and in upper class consumers (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967). Luxury products serve the purpose of self-expression or self-reward (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004) and this leads the consumer to find the ideal fit for their identity and the luxury brand image. Hence, self-concept works as a good consumer segmentation tool (Grubb & Grathwohl, 1967).

2.11.7 Status and Prestige

"Status can be viewed as a hierarchy of rewards or a hierarchy of displays or both simultaneously" (Henrich & Jose Gil-White, 2001, p. 166). Status, Power and Prestige have

been understood as a unidimensional concept and used interchangeably in research (Ryckman et al., 1972) (Leach, 1977).

The pursuit of status is a consequence of the class structure (Fisher, 1987). In fact, it is only through status consumption that the class position can be clearly communicated. The variables represented by status include residence type, value and location, position in community and social memberships (Fisher, 1987). Status consumption does not always need high financial resources, status can be acquired through cultural or social means as well (Fisher, 1987) such as a knowledgeable appreciation of art and music or membership to certain select groups.

When we refer to "prestige", we understand that a person who has prestige has a certain influence, their words carry weight and they will be given a respectful hearing (Henrich & Jose Gil-White, 2001). Hence, a person with prestige may be well-respected and enjoy deference within cultural and social environments. One way to acquire prestige is through occupational stature that comes with being in a profession that requires a special skill set such as doctors, lawyers, and such. The other is by engagement in influential clubs such as social and professional memberships. People tend to engage in class congruent status consumption patterns (Sintas & Álvarez, 2004), that helps cement their class position as well.

2.11.8 Role of Lifestyle

In literature, lifestyle is defined as a way of life acceptable for a certain position.
"A lifestyle can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity" (Giddens, 1991, p. 81). Lifestyle is understood as a manifestation of potential behavior well-matched for a particular social class (Fisher, 1987).

There are many researchers that have tried to explain the relationship between lifestyle and social class. First is Bourdieu (1984) who posited that each social class has its unique lifestyle that is in line with its social position and consumption patterns that are borne out of the occupational stature. There is empirical evidence that food consumption choices are driven by class (Warde, 1997). There is the "post-Fordist" school of thought, that says lifestyle is becoming independent of class or the traditional structures do not define lifestyle choices

anymore (Beck, 1992). Beck (1992) does not claim that inequalities disappear rather the differences of class erode their social character due to individualization.

Lifestyle measures how people spend their time doing activities, what interests them and their opinions and views of their surroundings (Citeman, 2009). The understanding of consumer activities, interests, and opinions (AIOs) help marketers in customer segmentation which in turn helps create defined markets. Featherstone (1991) talks about the "petite bourgeoisie" who conserve their lifestyle by emblematic replication of the consumption patterns of a higher class. In this way they increase the scope and reach of those aspirational products albeit by imitation. Therefore, lifestyle can be considered as an important indicator of differentiation among the social classes. Variables like choice of residence, gym membership, choice of car, recreational sports activities, leisure travel choices, expenditures and frequency can be considered as lifestyle choices. Lifestyle Choices can also be acquired based on parental demographics (Durmaz & Tasdemir, 2014); where the children may gain knowledge of the consumption patterns, more so in upper classes (Riesman et al., 1950).

In research, lifestyle or the way in which a person lives is regarded as a decisive indicator of social class (Levy, 1966) (Myers & Guttman, 1974) (Hout, 2008). With the passage of time lifestyle evolved into an independent concept with psychographic categories and segmentation based on behaviors and/or spend on leisure activities (Coleman, 1983).

Lifestyle is not just about consumption patterns, it also includes attitudes, behaviours, and beliefs; and all classes of people engage in it depending upon their means and motivations (Giddens, 1991). In the modern world, lifestyle helps define who you are (Giddens, 1991) and provides access to like-minded groups. Lifestyle can be expressed through travel choices, use of automated products or the engagement of domestic staff such as maids, cooks, or drivers. Domestic workers are generally recruited from a lower class and their primary job is to provide their services for a fee to the higher classes. They are what you call "class curators" a term used by Goffman (1951, p. 303) and they not only embolden the status of those who they serve but also act as "class gatekeepers" (Dion & Borraz, 2017).

In research, there are various scales to measure lifestyle such as AIOs (activities, interests, and opinions), Value and Lifestyle segmentations (VALS 1 & 2), Rokeach Value survey, List of Values (LOV) among others.

2.12.0 Social Class Identity Dissonance (SCID)

There is sense of loss of the social class of origin experienced by an individual who adopts a new cultural identity as a result of upward mobility (Aries & Seider, 2007) and these feelings of pride, shame, and guilt associated with one's social class of origin is labelled as Social Class Identity Dissonance (SCID) (Nelson et al., 2008). Middle class individuals who experience upward mobility may experience a discontinuity between their past and present (Reay, 1996) and can experience an identity dissonance. Individuals lament the loss of their past as they renegotiate their own identity in the new class structure (Nelson et al., 2008) which would have an impact on consumption patterns. As an example, a consumer might look for cheap discounts in one product category and buy expensive luxury goods in another category. However, this variable has been excluded because it is outside the purview of this research and falls in the realm of psychology.

2.13.0 Social Class and Consumer Behaviour

Social class helps marketers with a definite market segmentation strategy because there are different variables associated with a social class hierarchy based on values, economic culture, and the societal context in which is discussed. There is much evidence in research that correlates buying behaviour with social class. Rich and Jain (1968) found an increase in the importance of fashion and frequency of purchase with rising social class. They also found a relationship of store preference associated with higher social classes. This view was substantiated by the research of Chinwendu and Shedrack (2018) who found a similar influence of social class on shopping store choices. This is also because store ambience speaks to a certain class of people and is designed in a way that attracts a certain target audience (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2004). Mathews and Slocum (1969) studied credit card usage among different social classes. There is also empirical evidence of experiential purchases providing greater happiness to higher-class consumers because their privilege gave them access and opportunities for self - development and expression (Lee et al., 2018).

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