MASTERARBEIT | MASTER'S THESIS

Titel | Title

Diversity and Inclusion in Luxury Brands

Effects of DEI on Brand Perceptions: A Comparison between Creative and Management Roles

verfasst von | submitted by

Nandita Shah B.A.

angestrebter akademischer Grad | in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science (MSc)

Wien | Vienna, 2026

Studienkennzahl lt. Studienblatt | Degree programme code as it appears on the student record sheet:	UA 066 914
Studienrichtung lt. Studienblatt | Degree programme as it appears on the student record sheet:	Masterstudium Internationale Betriebswirtschaft
Betreut von | Supervisor:	Univ.-Prof. Christoph Fuchs PhD
Mitbetreut von | Co-Supervisor:	Lic. Mestr. Cátia Alves Ph.D.

Abstract

The present thesis explores diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) as a brand signal in luxury branding, focusing on how communicated internal representation shapes consumer brand perceptions across creative and management roles. While societal expectations continue to shift and DEI becomes increasingly important in luxury brand discourse, it remains underexplored how consumers interpret DEI communication through hiring and how it influences brand evaluations and purchasing behaviour.

Following a quantitative research approach, this study employed a 2x2 between-subjects experiment to test the effects of diversity type and employee role, using a fictional luxury brand press release announcing a new employee. Two-way ANOVAs and ANCOVAs were used to analyse the responses from an online survey (N=176) that measured perceived brand innovativeness, brand attitude and purchase intention. The findings show that participants perceived the luxury brand as more innovative in the diverse (vs. non-diverse) condition, but attitudinal response and purchasing behaviour were not significantly affected. The organizational role (creative vs. management) did not moderate these effects.

This study contributes to research on DEI within luxury brands by focusing on hiring-related DEI signals and their role in shaping brand perceptions, and how visible diversity can be integrated into luxury brand communication in a meaningful way. It provides insights for luxury brands seeking to communicate inclusive hiring in ways that are genuine, credible and consistent with their broader brand strategy – moving beyond superficial DEI communication. However, shifting brand attitudes and purchase intentions may call for more than only DEI communication through hiring.

Keywords:

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), employee role framing, luxury branding, hiring signals, perceived brand innovativeness, purchase intention

Abstract (German)

Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht Diversität, Chancengleichheit und Inklusion (DEI) als Markensignal im Kontext von Luxusmarken und analysiert, wie kommunizierte interne Repräsentation in kreativen und Management-Rollen die Markenwahrnehmung von Konsument:innen beeinflusst. Während sich gesellschaftliche Erwartungen stetig verändern und DEI im Diskurs rund um Luxusmarken an Bedeutung gewinnt, ist bislang wenig erforscht, wie Konsument:innen DEI-Kommunikation im Rahmen von Einstellungsentscheidungen interpretieren und welche Auswirkungen dies auf Markenbewertungen sowie das Kaufverhalten hat.

Im Rahmen eines quantitativen Forschungsansatzes wurde ein Experiment mit einem 2x2-Design mit unabhängigen Gruppen durchgeführt, um die Effekte von Diversitätstyp und Mitarbeiterrolle anhand einer fiktiven Pressemitteilung einer Luxusmarke zur Einstellung eines neuen Mitarbeiters zu untersuchen. Zweifaktorielle Varianzanalysen (ANOVAs) und Kovarianzanalysen (ANCOVAs) wurden zur Auswertung der Antworten einer Online-Umfrage (N=176) eingesetzt, welche die wahrgenommene Innovationskraft der Marke, die Markeneinstellung sowie die Kaufabsicht erfasste. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Teilnehmenden die Luxusmarke in der diversen (vs. nicht-diversen) Bedingung als innovativer wahrnahmen. Markeneinstellung und Kaufverhalten wurden jedoch nicht signifikant beeinflusst. Die organisationale Rolle (kreativ vs. Management) moderierte diese Effekte nicht.

Die Studie trägt zur Forschung zu DEI im Kontext der Luxusmarkenführung bei, indem sie DEI-Signale in der Kommunikation von Einstellungsentscheidungen in den Fokus rückt und deren Einfluss auf die Markenwahrnehmung untersucht. Außerdem zeigt sie auf, wie sichtbare Diversität in die Markenkommunikation von Luxusmarken sinnvoll integriert werden kann. Die Ergebnisse liefern praktische Implikationen für Luxusmarken, die inklusive Einstellungspraktiken authentisch, glaubwürdig und im Einklang mit ihrer Markenstrategie kommunizieren möchten – und damit über oberflächliche DEI-Kommunikation hinausgehen. Gleichzeitig erfordern veränderte Markeneinstellungen und Kaufabsichten möglicherweise mehr als nur DEI-Kommunikation über Einstellungsentscheidungen.

Stichwörter: *Diversität, Chancengleichheit und Inklusion (DEI), Luxusmarkenführung, DEI-Signale in der Einstellungskommunikation, Rahmung von Mitarbeiterrollen, wahrgenommene Markeninnovativität, Kaufabsicht*

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to everyone who contributed to the completion of my thesis. First and foremost, I am very grateful to my supervisor, Cátia Alves, for her continuous support, insightful feedback and guidance throughout every stage of this thesis. Her expertise and encouragement have been essential in helping me shape and improve my work.

I would also like to thank my examiner, Christoph Fuchs, for his valuable feedback during the seminar, which greatly contributed to the development and quality of this thesis.

I am deeply thankful to all the participants who took part in this study. Their willingness to share their time and perspectives made this research possible and meaningful.

Finally, I would like to thank my family, especially my parents and siblings, as well as my close friends for their constant encouragement and moral support throughout my academic journey. Their patience, understanding, and belief in me have helped me pursue my goals with determination and confidence and have meant more than words can express.

"And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it."

– Paulo Coelho

Nandita Shah

Vienna, 23.02.2026

Table of Content

List of Illustrations & Tables

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Definition
2D	Two-Dimensional
α	Cronbach's Alpha
ANCOVA	Analysis of Covariance
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
APA	American Psychological Association
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CI	Confidence Interval
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
D&I	Diversity and Inclusion
DEI	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
DV	Dependent Variable
e.g.	for example (Latin phrase: exempli gratia)
ERGs	Employee Resource Groups
EU	European Union
FLE	Frontline Employee(s)
FMCG	Fast-Moving Consumer Goods
FTSE	Financial Times Stock Exchange
Gen Z	Generation Z
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
H	Hypothesis
HR	Human Resources
i.e.	that is (Latin phrase: id est)
IBM	International Business Machines
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (and related identities)
LGBTQIA+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual (and related identities)
LVMH	Moët Hennessy Louis Vuitton
M	Mean

N	Sample Size
n.D.	no Date
p	p-value
POC	People of Colour
R&D	Research and Development
RQ	Research Question
SD	Standard Deviation
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TPB	Theory of Planned Behaviour
η^2	Eta Squared

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have become increasingly important in branding discussions (Arsel et al., 2021) as businesses respond to growing consumer demands for ethical and value-centric practices, using DEI as a key tool to communicate brand identity and align with consumer values (Ferraro et al., 2022). According to surveys, two-thirds of consumers in the U. S. say their social beliefs affect their buying choices (Barwick et al., 2022), and brands led by diverse teams often perform better than competitors (Barwick et al., 2022). For many companies, DEI acts as a driver of company culture and a competitive edge, boosting creativity, performance, and brand reputation when applied genuinely (Ferraro et al., 2022; Clarke, 2023).

Luxury brands have been slower to adopt DEI initiatives compared to other industries. Traditionally characterised by exclusivity, heritage and limited accessibility (Radon, 2012b; Kapferer & Bastien, 2013), they have long relied on scarcity as a core element of their brand identity. This conservative approach has made them less open to diversity and inclusion initiatives. In response, luxury brands have begun implementing different strategies to navigate the tension between inclusivity and exclusivity. Recent examples represent this dynamic: Virgil Abloh's appointment as Louis Vuitton's first African American creative director demonstrated how diverse leadership in a creative role can elevate innovation, cultural relevance, and consumer engagement (Debenedetti et al., 2024; Phelps, 2018). In contrast, Jaguar's rebranding campaign faced backlash for blurring its brand heritage, which led to a weakening of core associations and perceptions of inauthenticity (Gabbatt, 2024b).

Even though some brands have tried to address diversity in recruitment and marketing, these attempts are typically framed within the boundaries of brand preservation. As noted by Shoaib (2025), recent appointments highlight a persistent lack of diversity in leadership roles. Among nine creative director appointments made in early 2025, only four were women and one was a person of colour (POC). Applying DEI principles within the luxury domain remains challenging, especially with the sector's focus on heritage and exclusivity. Still, DEI has shown a strong positive impact in other industries (Shoaib, 2025). While some research suggests that luxury brand equity can benefit from DEI initiatives (Bowen & Papadopoulou, 2025b), other studies point to potential risks of dilution when inclusivity clashes with exclusivity (Debenedetti et al., 2024). However, despite increasing attention to DEI in branding, its implications for luxury brands remain underexplored.

1.2 Problem Definition and Research Focus

While prior research presents mixed results regarding the impact of DEI on brand performance and brand perceptions, it remains unclear under which conditions these effects occur – particularly in the context of luxury branding. To address this gap, the present study investigates how diversity and inclusion should be incorporated into luxury brands, focusing on the impact of diverse backgrounds in different organizational roles. As most industries increasingly embrace DEI integration and luxury brands begin to adapt their hiring practices, it is crucial to understand whether these shifts are beneficial or potentially problematic for luxury brands.

Although previous studies have examined diversity effects across various industries (Pellecchia, 2019), little is known about how the specific organizational role of diverse team members – particularly in creative versus management positions – shapes consumer perceptions, brand equity, and authenticity in the luxury context. Management teams are often viewed as guardians of tradition and brand legacy (Jensen, 2017), whereas creative teams are associated with innovation and originality (Pérez et al., 2020). However, these effects may differ depending on how and where diversity is represented within the organization.

While previous studies have shown that diversity can enhance innovation, brand value, and authenticity in general business contexts (Hewlett et al., 2013; Ferraro et al., 2022), little is known about whether these effects translate to the luxury sector, where exclusivity remains central to brand identity (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

This topic is highly relevant given the increasing expectations for luxury brands to authentically reflect DEI values. By focusing on internal representation of DEI and its communication through hiring, the study explores how visible diversity across different organizational roles influences consumer brand perceptions of luxury brands. It aims to understand whether communicated inclusive hiring practices strengthen or challenge perceptions of authenticity and performance. In doing so, the study seeks to contribute to a better theoretical understanding of the relationship between DEI and brand perception in luxury branding, while providing insights that can help frame discussions around how DEI can be approached and balanced with exclusivity.

Based on these considerations, this thesis is guided by the following research question:

RQ: How does the presence of diverse team members influence brand perceptions in luxury brands and to what extent do these effects differ between creative and management roles?

The study adopts a quantitative research approach to address this research question, with the methodological design and implementation described in Chapter 3.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Following the introduction – which outlines the research background, problem definition, objectives and significance of the study, the structure is as follows: Chapter 2 provides a review of key literature on DEI and the luxury industry, with a focus on branding, authenticity and consumer behaviour. It concludes with a synthesis of key insights and development of the conceptual framework and hypotheses.

Chapter 3 describes the research design, including the experimental structure, the selection of participants and the methods used for data collection and analysis. It also addresses ethical aspects and explains the reasoning behind the chosen methodological approach.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study, including detailed statistical analyses, hypothesis testing and the examination of interactions between key variables.

Chapter 5 discusses the findings in relation to the research question and theoretical framework. It highlights the study's contribution to understanding how communicated internal DEI representation shapes brand perceptions, addresses limitations, and outlines both academic and practical implications for future research.

Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the study by summarizing the main findings, reflecting on their broader significance, and suggesting directions for future research.

2. Literature Review

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has become an increasingly prominent topic in branding discourse, reflecting both evolving societal values as well as a strategic business imperative (Arsel et al., 2021). Consumers have come to expect brands to actively commit to DEI, making it a potential competitive advantage when implemented authentically (Ferraro et al., 2022). Business-oriented arguments that link leadership diversity to performance outcomes and innovation also reflect this (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020; Clarke, 2023)

This shift aligns with wider cultural trends, such as "purpose-driven" branding, reflecting growing expectation that brands stand for values beyond economic performance and align with consumers' moral and social orientations (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2015; Ferraro et al., 2022). Demands for transparency, authenticity and social responsibility have increased and businesses now are evaluated not only based on product, quality or reputation but also on the social and ethical values they openly represent (Ferraro et al., 2022; Fritz et al., 2017).

An increasing number of brands are actively participating in sociopolitical conversations ("corporate activism") by making public statements on issues such as gender equality or LGBTQIA+ rights (Vredenburg et al., 2020). However, this trend reveals a clear tension: consumers and stakeholders quickly reject actions seen as insincere and self-serving, often termed as "woke-washing" (Vredenburg et al., 2020; Danziger, 2019). This gap between expectations and actual practises highlights the need to embed DEI beyond surface-level initiatives and align internal culture with external communication. (Ravazzani et al., 2025).

Lastly, DEI is a multidimensional concept and may be interpreted differently across cultural and institutional contexts. Recognizing such contextual differences is especially important in the luxury sector, which operates across international markets and culturally diverse consumer demographics (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

2.1 Foundations of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

2.1.1 Defining DEI

Today, DEI is widely viewed as a strategic asset that can drive innovation, strengthen brand reputation and respond to evolving societal expectations. The elements of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) represent unique yet interconnected components in organizational studies. Understanding its basic principles is essential for explaining its growing influence in business contexts.

Diversity refers to the demographic and cognitive differences within groups and includes both visible and invisible characteristics (Roberson, 2006). Hewlett et al. (2013) distinguish between intrinsic diversity (e.g., gender, race, age) and acquired diversity (e.g., cross-cultural experience). Together, these aspects create 2D diversity, which is associated with greater innovation and leadership effectiveness. While diversity can be observed individually through personal and cognitive differences, it is also socially constructed and formed by unequal access to power and resources, reflecting broader hierarchies that influence how individuals experience inclusion and exclusion within organizations (Barak, 2015; Nkomo et al., 2019).

Thus, diversity alone does not ensure fairness or meaningful participation. Inclusion refers to the extent to which diverse individuals are valued, respected and meaningfully engaged in organizational processes (e.g., fair access to opportunities, decision-making and information), (Roberson, 2006). Genuine inclusion requires both belonging and uniqueness, ensuring that individuals feel accepted while their identities are recognized (Barak 2015). Building on this foundation, Shore et al. (2017) conceptualize inclusion as a multilevel construct that covers individual experiences, leadership behaviours, organizational practises and broader workplace climate – emphasizing psychological safety and authentic self-expression as key features of inclusive environments.

Yet, inclusion without structural fairness remains limited (Nkomo et al., 2019). Equity addresses structural inequalities by promoting fairness beyond formal equality – making it a central component of DEI frameworks. Thus, effective DEI initiatives require more than representation; without authentic inclusion and equity, diversity may reinforce existing imbalances rather than enable fair participation (Nkomo et al., 2019; Roberson, 2006).

A distinction is often made between internal DEI – such as inclusive hiring practises, leadership diversity, and equitable policies – and external DEI, which includes branding strategies and social responsibility initiatives (Ravazzani et al., 2025). Aligning internal DEI efforts with external communication is considered important, as perceived discrepancies can cause scepticism and credibility concerns (Ravazzani et al., 2025).

Over time, the understanding of DEI has evolved. Initially grounded in the civil rights movements and anti-discrimination laws, early strategies focused on legal equality and demographic representation (Nkomo et al., 2019). With the rise of globalization and changes in neoliberal policies in the late 20th century, many organizations adopted diversity management approaches that framed diversity as a business advantage (Kochan et al., 2003). However, these strategies often remained surface-level, failing to confront structural disparities. During this period, “colour-blind” ideologies gained popularity, promoting the idea that equal treatment would guarantee fairness; yet in practice, they often ended up ignoring systemic racism and power imbalances (Nkomo et al., 2019).

In response, scholars expanded DEI beyond compliance-oriented approaches, suggesting that representation alone is insufficient unless diverse perspectives are integrated into core practises and organizational learning (Kochan et al., 2003). Critical scholars have also pointed out the challenges of performative DEI, with Nkomo et al. (2019) noting the increasing disconnect between organizational discourse and ongoing inequalities. According to Ahmed (2012), many initiatives remain largely symbolic while maintaining existing hierarchies, which she calls a “diversity regime”, and without structural reform, DEI discourse may obscure inequality and reinforce exclusion.

2.1.2 Dimensions of DEI

Meaningful implementation of DEI in practise entails moving beyond abstract principles toward concrete identity-based dimensions that shape inclusion and exclusion within organizations.

A central dimension is gender, which encompasses male and female, non-binary, transgender and queer identities (Arsel et al., 2021). Established gender norms influence leadership evaluations and workplace dynamics, as behaviours such as assertiveness (i.e., confident, direct, self-assured communication) may be perceived differently depending on gender expectations and unconscious biases (Eagly & Karau, 2002). While gender diversity in leadership has increased (Figure 1), progress remains gradual – highlighting that inclusion remains dependent on psychological safety and the ability to fully express one’s identity (Shore et al., 2017).

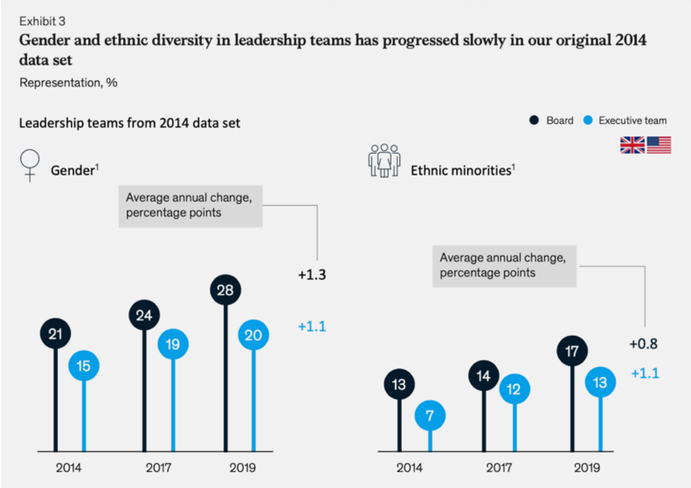


Figure 1. Gender and ethnic diversity in leadership teams (2014-2019)
Source: McKinsey & Company (2020). Diversity Wins: How Inclusion Matters, Exhibit 3, p. 15.

Race and ethnicity present another core dimension within DEI, as racialized power structures shape how individuals from minority groups face exclusion in both workplace and marketplace contexts (Arsel et al., 2021). Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality perspective highlights that race and gender often overlap, creating combined forms of discrimination. These hierarchies are embedded in global economic systems and colonial histories, influencing organizational structures and DEI approaches across regions (Kvangraven, 2022).

Another aspect is sexual orientation, defined as an individual's pattern of emotional, romantic, or sexual attraction towards others, including identities such as heterosexual, lesbian, gay, bisexual and others (Simonelli et al., 2022). Acknowledging sexual orientation as a relevant aspect of DEI is associated with fostering workplace inclusion, as LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face discrimination and bias, affecting well-being and retention (Shore et al., 2008). Addressing heteronormative assumptions through inclusive policies and awareness can support psychological safety and belonging (Shore et al., 2008; Simonelli et al., 2022).

Age is another DEI dimension that is often underexamined. Older employees may be stereotyped as less adaptable or technologically competent, limiting access to training programs, leadership roles, or key projects (Shore et al., 2017). Younger employees can also face bias as lacking experience or dedication, which restricts promotion prospects and influences in decision-making (Schmitz et al., 2025). Shore et al. (2017) highlight the importance recognizing age diversity as a driver for learning and innovation.

Furthermore, disability and neurodiversity have become an increasing focus in DEI research. Neurodiverse individuals (e.g., autism, dyslexia) often face exclusion due to standardized hiring processes and communication norms (Krzeminska et al., 2019). As noted by Shore et al. (2017), meaningful inclusion considers both visible disabilities (e.g., mobility impairments) and less apparent conditions (e.g., mental health issues). Austin & Pisano (2017) highlight that structural barriers persist, despite cognitive skills, contributing to unemployment rates.

Social class and economic background also shape inclusion. Individuals from working-class or economically disadvantaged backgrounds often face barriers to career advancement, including limited access to networks or familiarity with established workplace norms (Ferdman & Deane, 2013). These challenges often intersect with other factors like race or gender, reinforcing disadvantage (Nkomo et al., 2019), while economic instability and status hierarchies may further affect identity and participation dynamics (Arsel et al., 2021).

Taken together, these dimensions show that diversity extends beyond individual differences to belonging to social groups that vary in terms of visibility, stigma and symbolic meaning. Gender identity and sexual orientation in particular are often associated with heightened social visibility and increased risk of marginalization (Barak, 2015). From an inclusive perspective, these identities are closely tied to recognition and acceptance, as inclusion requires considering individual uniqueness (Shore et al., 2017). Due to their symbolic relevance, such forms of diversity are important within branding contexts, as they are embedded in wider societal discussions about norms and legitimacy (Arsel et al., 2021). Therefore, representations of non-normative identities are rarely seen as neutral and may shape judgments of authenticity and ethical alignment.

Other identity factors, including religion and cultural background, may also influence inclusion experiences, but are not the primary focus of this study.

Overall, these dimensions highlight the multifaceted nature of DEI within organizations, as Crenshaw’s (1991) intersectionality framework emphasizes that forms of marginalization rarely operate independently, reinforcing complex and interconnected disadvantage.

2.1.3. DEI across Industries

Diversity and inclusion efforts differ greatly across industries, regions, and organizational cultures. As Syed and Özbilgin (2015) argue, DEI is not a neutral or technical process but embedded in institutional, cultural, and legal contexts. Therefore, implementation strategies differ depending on legal systems, historical inequalities and societal norms. For example, sectors such as media, education and healthcare are often subject to higher public and legal scrutiny, while fields such as engineering or finance tend to rely on formal compliance measures with limited cultural change. Effective strategies therefore depend on both organizational commitment and sensitivity to local norms, power relations, and stakeholder expectations.

"*Diversity management is not a neutral or purely technical endeavour. It is embedded in national histories, institutional arrangements, cultural norms, and political economies. Therefore, D&I practices must be interpreted and enacted in context*" (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015, p. 6).

Efforts to assess DEI progress across industries have grown in recent years, as seen by benchmarks such as the FTSE Diversity and Inclusion Index (2024) and the Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index (2023). Notably, a study by Boston Consulting Group (Lorenzo et al., 2018) shows that brands with diverse management teams report 19% higher innovation revenues, underscoring the creative potential of DEI.

Despite growing awareness, a significant gap between internal structural change and external DEI communication persists, which can lead to backlash when messaging is viewed as superficial (Ferraro et al., 2022), as illustrated by brand controversies such as Prada's racially insensitive figurines (Hale, 2021) or Gucci's blackface sweater (Danziger, 2019). Ravazzani et al. (2025) show that within Italian companies, internal DEI (e.g., inclusive hiring) is often viewed as more meaningful yet more challenging to achieve. Shoaib (2025) highlights this gap in the fashion industry, where inclusive campaigns often contrast with homogenous leadership structures.

Although some progress in recruitment initiatives have advanced, leadership diversity remains limited across most industries. McKinsey (2020) reports that brands in the top quartile for ethnic and gender diversity on executive teams are 36% more likely to outperform in profitability. However, increases in female and ethnic minority representation at leadership level have been modest over the past five years, reflecting persistent structural barriers. Similarly, Hewlett et al. (2013) find that while diverse leadership fosters innovation, the majority of companies still lack 2D diversity.

Notable examples across industries demonstrate how inclusive leadership translate DEI principles practice. In the automotive industry, Mary Barra's appointment as the first female CEO of General Motors challenged long-standing gender barriers (Rushe, 2013). Such examples illustrate how leadership diversity can promote equity beyond symbolic initiatives. Similarly, Apple CEO Tim Cook's disclosure of his sexual orientation has been linked to authentic and emphatic leadership and a stronger alignment between individual identity and inclusive workplace culture (Ambrosino, 2014). However, the impact of leadership diversity varies depending on organizational context, as team climate and task structure can influence whether diversity leads to innovation and cohesion (Guillaume et al., 2017; Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013).

Approaches to DEI also differ in how organizations balance internal and external efforts. Accenture exemplifies strong internal integration through DEI infrastructure and Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) (Accenture, 2023). In entertainment, Disney Animation shows how external representation can complement internal creative leadership through more diverse directorial appointments (Rubin, 2019). Similarly, Unilever combines internal diversity with market-facing innovation by developing products for diverse consumer groups (Unilever, 2023). Together, these examples suggest that DEI implementation is expanding, progress remains uneven and restricted across industries.

While DEI implementation is expanding, progress in addressing internal structural barriers remains uneven across industries. In technology, gender and racial disparities persist, and retention remains a challenge despite initiatives like coding academies or employee resource (Hewlett et al., 2013). In finance, "cultural fit" norms can unintentionally exclude working-class and minority candidates (Ferraro et al., 2022). Media and fashion industries may promote inclusive branding while leadership remains largely homogeneous, highlighting the gap between communication and internal diversity (Shoaib, 2025).

By contrast, in retail, rising consumer expectations have driven efforts like Sephora's 15% pledge to support Black-owned brands (Barwick et al., 2022), while healthcare continues to face internal inclusion gaps despite a diverse client base, reflecting how established norms and rigid structures, can make change more difficult (Syed & Özbilgin, 2015).

In addition to private initiatives, regulatory frameworks increasingly influence DEI practises. For instance, gender quotas have become more common within the European Union and from 2026, EU-listed companies will be required to ensure that at least 40% of non-executive director roles are held by individuals from the underrepresented sex (European Commission, 2022). Gotsis and Kortezi (2015) observe that in Global South contexts, such as India or Brazil, DEI efforts may move beyond surface-level representation and focus more strongly on structural exclusions linked to as well as ingrained power structures. Despite such policy developments, a disconnect between public DEI commitments and real organizational change often persists.

Together, these theoretical foundations and identity-based dimensions lay the groundwork for understanding how DEI functions within organizations and in consumer-facing contexts. The following section will explore how these dynamics unfold in the luxury industry.

2.2 Luxury Branding

2.2.1 Core characteristics of Luxury Brands

The concept of luxury has long been a topic of debate in both academic and managerial contexts. As noted by Kapferer & Bastien (2012), luxury is a distinct and multi-faceted concept with its own strategic logic, shaped by cultural meaning and symbolic value rather than simply being "premium". Similarly, Ko et al. (2019) define luxury brands by their exceptional quality, refined craftsmanship, prestigious image, and symbolic and emotional value that extend beyond functional utility. Core attributes include uniqueness, exclusivity, symbolism, and aesthetic refinement.

A defining characteristic of luxury is the ability to "sell a dream": luxury brands create aspirational worlds shaped by strong emotional appeal (Kapferer & Bastien 2012). Through evocative storytelling, immersive experiences and curated rituals, they enable identity expression and social distinction beyond exclusive products, while fulfilling psychological desires. This is demonstrated by Dior's invitation-only couture events, Prada's immersive pop-up space or Gucci Garden's experiential space in Florence (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Luxury includes not only tangible goods (e.g., designer fashion, watches, jewellery) but also exclusive experiences and services (e.g., private travel, luxury hotels, concierge) designed to evoke privilege and elevated status (Ko et al., 2019).

Exclusivity continues to be a core element of luxury branding and it is intentionally constructed through rarity, selective availability, and controlled access. Such scarcity increases desirability and reinforces the symbolic power of luxury ownership and experience (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

Another foundation of luxury branding is heritage. Brands foster authenticity through long-standing histories, founder myths and strong ties to geographic origins. These elements communicate tradition, quality, and legitimacy. At the same time, storytelling, symbolic imagery, and ritualistic branding foster emotional engagement and aspirational value – creating a distinctive narrative that consumers are invited to join (Napoli et al., 2013; Dion & Arnould, 2011).

Craftsmanship – manifested in handmade production and the use of selected, high-quality materials – is another core element of luxury branding. It signals authenticity, attention to detail and enduring value, reinforcing the perception that luxury is not only beautiful but also built to last (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

Historically, luxury was closely linked to royal families and the social elite and was frequently the subject of moral debates – viewed by some as cultural sophistication and by others as an example of unnecessary excess Over time, it evolved into a marker of social status, cultural progress, and personal achievement (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Today, the luxury sector remains deeply rooted in its European heritage, particularly in France and Italy (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015), where many influential luxury houses, such as Louis Vuitton and Prada, originated.

The global luxury market represents a highly heterogenous and economically significant consumer segment (Bain & Company, 2014) and is dominated by a small number of leading brands. According to a Statista report (Rocco, 2025), LVMH was the most valuable luxury brand in the world in 2025. The market has grown rapidly – particularly in Asia – and continues to be defined by the cultural leadership and economic strength of these prestigious brands (Ko et al., 2019).

The luxury market is diverse and does not represent a uniform concept as brands differ in their degree of exclusivity and accessibility (Truong et al., 2009). Successful luxury branding relies on more than exclusive products or prestigious origins. Luxury branding relies on consistent storytelling, signals of exclusivity and carefully designed experiences that reinforce heritage and core values. The presence of a strong creative vision and symbolic rituals – such as fashion shows and signature retail environments – further strengthens this unique identity (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

Luxury brands further distinguish themselves through premium pricing, artistic collaborations, and by creating a sense of mystery around the brand, rather than relying on mass-market advertising (Kapferer and Bastien, 2012; Radon, 2012). Distribution is typically highly selective, with products offered through flagship stores, exclusive retailers, and carefully chosen online channels (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

These strategies reinforce the core value of exclusivity that has long defined luxury branding. However, this emphasis increasingly stands in contrast to current demands for diversity, openness and social responsibility – a conflict that forms the foundation of the so-called inclusivity paradox discussed in the following section.

2.2.2 The Inclusivity Paradox in Luxury

A central dilemma for luxury brands is the need to reconcile their long-standing emphasis on exclusivity with rising expectations toward wider accessibility. Over time, structural and cultural shifts have made luxury goods more accessible, a development often described as the "democratization of luxury" (Roper et al., 2013). At the same time, luxury brands differ in the extent to which they extend accessibility, ranging from highly exclusive to more "masstige" forms that appeal to broader consumer segments (Truong et al., 2009).

Despite these new demands, luxury brands have typically maintained a conservative, tradition-focused image and have often been less open to change, preferring to preserve their established brand values and symbols in order to set themselves apart from the mainstream (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Creative directors and founders play a crucial role as guardians of the brand's heritage and distinct vision, safeguarding continuity and brand uniqueness (Dion & Arnould, 2011).

This paradox is reflected in practises of brands such as Chanel or Louis Vuitton, which may promote inclusive communication yet still rely on exclusivity, selective distribution and limited editions as core strategies (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Louis Vuitton's collaboration with the artist Yayoi Kusama, for example, featured playful, inclusive imagery (Zamindar, 2023) but was released as a limited edition – reinforcing scarcity. Similarly, Gucci's diverse campaigns coexist with restricted availability and premium pricing. More broadly, luxury reteail environments can appear open and welcoming while reinforcing exclusivity through subtle barriers to access and controlled interaction – making "entry" a part of the luxury experience (Debendetti et al., 2024)

Broader societal and technological trends – such as sustainability, digital innovation, and changing generational preferences – have changed how consumers access and experience luxury. For instance, the rise of "pre-loved " or "second-hand" luxury goods reflects a wider shift in how consumers value luxury today, linking luxury to meanings of sustainability and "treasure seeking" (Turunen & Leipämaa-Leskinen, 2015).

However, even though brands have started to respond to these societal changes, progress toward greater inclusion has been comparatively slow. This adds another dimension to the tension between exclusivity and inclusivity, as luxury brands now face the challenge of meeting current expectations while preserving their core identity. How they navigate this paradox is increasingly seen as a key factor in maintaining relevance and authenticity in the modern luxury market.

2.2.3 The Role of Creativity and Authenticity

Creativity plays a crucial role in determining how luxury brands express their brand identity, differentiate themselves and stay culturally relevant (Pérez et al., 2020). Given that creative output is among the most visible factors of luxury branding and can directly influence the symbolic dimensions of the brand (e.g., aesthetics, narratives). Therefore, creative differentiation serves as another fundamental aspect of luxury branding, making creative output a key area in which DEI can become visible.

Originality and innovation are essential qualities that allow luxury brands to stand out and remain relevant within shifting cultural trends. Rather than relying solely on tradition, successful luxury brands embrace what Pérez et al. (2020) call "creative heritage" – the ability to balance long-standing traditions with innovative ideas. This approach enables brands to create distinctive products and narratives rooted in legacy while being aligned with contemporary preferences.

Luxury brands distinguish themselves by taking creative risks – whether through avant-garde design, unconventional collaborations or reinterpretation of brand codes – resulting in products and campaigns which challenge established norms and shape industry trends (Pérez et al., 2020). Moreover, the interplay between tradition and innovation is often cyclical: Kapferer & Valette-Florence (2016) emphasize the need for established luxury houses to stay "very actual" and consistently renew their creative input to avoid repetitive expressions and sustain originality (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2016). Building on this idea, diverse perspectives can expand the range of ideas that brands use for inspiration, supporting innovation and long-term relevance.

In addition to creativity, authenticity is a fundamental and multifaceted element of luxury branding, shaping how consumers interpret a brand's identity, heritage and credibility. Napoli et al. (2013, p. 1091) define it as "*the perceived genuineness or trueness of an object, brand, or experience, which is actively constructed by consumers through the selection and interpretation of cues that fit their own goals and context*". They highlight that authenticity in luxury can be literal – demonstrated by strict adherence to heritage, tradition, or place of origin – or approximate, which relies on emotional and symbolic impressions of tradition. It can also be understood as indexical authenticity (i.e. grounded in objective markers like provenance and craftsmanship) versus iconic authenticity (i.e. expressed through brand stories, imagery, and symbolic cues) (Napoli et al., 2013).

The perceived value of luxury brands operates on multiple levels: emotionally (e.g., pleasure, pride, joy) symbolically (e.g., status, identity expression, a sense of belonging) and functional value linked to quality and craftsmanship (Wiedmann et al., 2007). In general, authenticity is not simply "given", but can be formed through branding and communication, as consumers form opinions by evaluating signals brands provide (Beverland et al., 2008.)

Beverland et al. (2008) further argue that authenticity is often constructed through marketing narratives and indicating that brand myths, even if perceived as genuine, are often shaped by strategic brand management. Within luxury contexts, this implies that storytelling around heritage, craftsmanship and brand myths can function as key authenticity signals.

Perceived authenticity significantly shapes consumer response. When a luxury brand is regarded as authentic, consumers often develop stronger emotional attachment, a greater willingness to pay premium prices, enhanced loyalty, and a higher likelihood of recommending the brand (Morhart et al., 2014). In this context, authenticity also plays an essential role in shaping how consumers perceive diversity initiatives, as such efforts may be interpreted through the broader set of cues that they associate with the brand.

Having outlined the core values and identity-shaping mechanisms of luxury brands, the next section examines how the integration of DEI is reshaping the luxury sector.

2.3 DEI in the Luxury Sector

2.3.1 How DEI integrates into Luxury Branding

As outlined above, DEI within the luxury industry is shaped by patterns of exclusivity, heritage and symbolic branding. As a result, cues related to inclusion unfold within a framework that differs from mainstream industries, whether in organisational structures, creative leadership or consumer-facing environments. These contextual dynamics also show why DEI can be examined in various areas of luxury branding.

Luxury brands are increasingly rethinking their organizational strategies – including consumer-facing environments and internal roles – in response by rising societal expectations and market dynamics. According to Srivastava et al. (2025), luxury branding continues to navigate the tension between exclusivity and sustainability, as consumers expectations evolve. Building on this logic, similar tension can also occur in the context of DEI, as brands may seek to balance exclusivity with broader norms of social openness.

Debenedetti et al. (2025) notes that luxury brands address this disparity by designing retail spaces with warm, welcoming elements that foster a sense of inclusivity while preserving the brand's exclusive image, showing how physical retail environments can shape how inclusivity is communicated. While prior research shows that luxury retail environments are traditionally shaped by exclusive and selective behaviours – with frontline employees (FLE) acting as gatekeepers – more recent work suggests that FLE diversity functions as a symbolic and visual cue that signals movement beyond established norms, which may strengthen perceptions among younger consumers, and support more socially inclusive branding. However, representation in FLE roles remains underexplored despite the visibility at main consumer touchpoints (Bowen & Papadopoulou, 2025).

Consumers assess DEI on both visual and structural levels, whether external brand messaging aligns with internal practises and structures (Ravazzani et al. 2025). In luxury brands, this alignment may be important because brand meaning strongly depends on credibility and symbolic meaning (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

2.3.2 Representation and Inclusion in Creative vs. Management Roles

Internal diversity – particularly in leadership positions – remains comparatively low in the luxury sector compared to other industries (Butler-Young & Williams, 2024). This disparity is especially visible in creative departments, where leadership roles have traditionally been homogeneous (Roca et. al., 2023).

Within luxury brands, diverse leadership in creative departments plays a crucial role in shaping team culture and brand perception. When inclusive structures exist, leaders from underrepresented groups can drive change by mentoring others and promoting diversity – especially in larger, network-based luxury firms with formal career pathways (Roca et al., 2023). However, as Critical Mass Theory emphasizes, isolated representation is rarely effective: a single diverse creative leader is unlikely to shift team dynamics unless part of a broader institutional commitment to inclusion (Roca et al., 2023). This challenge is reflected in the "labyrinth of leadership" metaphor, which illustrates structural barriers women face – such as biased evaluations, unequal tasks, and double standards (Eagly et al., 2008).

Moreover, the luxury sector's creative departments remain highly homogeneous. Among the 30 top luxury brands in the Vogue Business Index, only eight of 33 creative directors are women – and just one is a woman of color (Francombe, 2023; Bramley 2023). A key reason may lie in career pathways and appointment dynamics, limited access for underrepresented groups and reinforcing cultural uniformity. Even in companies with an overall diverse employee base – such as Kering, where women make up more than 60% of the workforce (Kering, n. D.) – creative leadership positions continue to be primarily uniform (Adegeest, 2023). Such discrepancies between workforce structure and leadership representation have become a growing focus in luxury branding research.

Beyond numerical inclusion, diversity in creative decision-making carries symbolic and strategic value. It shapes brand narratives, offers aspirational visibility and fosters psychological safety – important for collaboration and innovation in the luxury industry (Carmeli et al., 2010). According to Bernstein (2019), embedding DEI in actual decision-making – rather than limiting it to campaign representation – remains essential.

Creative and managerial roles operate under different logics. Creative functions shape the brand's visible, symbolic and expressive aspects through aesthetics, storytelling and reinterpretation of heritage (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Within luxury, this includes translating brand identity into creative and cultural forms that preserve originality and differentiation.

In contrast, managerial functions are characterized by strategic governance, consistency and long-term brand direction (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Keller, 2009). In the context of luxury, where exclusivity and tradition play a central role, their tasks are likely to involve more structured and conservative decision-making. Management teams can also support innovation, but typically through more structured and formal processes. Given their differing visibility, influence and responsibilities, it is important to consider each area separately when examining the implementation of internal DEI practices within luxury brands.

These dynamics are clearly illustrated in the case of Virgil Abloh, who became the first Black Men's Artistic Director at Louis Vuitton in 2018, marking a notable departure from traditional norms of luxury fashion leadership (Phelps, 2018). His appointment was widely noted as historically significant and symbolically meaningful within the luxury industry. Beyond aesthetics, Phelps (2018) highlights Abloh's cultural relevance and appeal to younger audiences, suggesting that diverse representation in a senior creative position – combined with creative authority and high visibility – can shape symbolic narratives of a luxury brand and how it is perceived and what it stands for.

The following section provides additional examples of how luxury brands address DEI on an organisational level.

2.3.3 Examples of successful DEI strategies

Although the majority of luxury brands still struggle with the structural and organisational barriers as highlighted above, several companies have started to create and implement more meaningful DEI strategies. While these examples represent exceptions within the industry, they also demonstrate how luxury brands can adapt when inclusion is integrated into organisational.

Increasingly, luxury brands move past symbolic gestures by embedding DEI into their core organizational strategies and brand ecosystems. For instance, Gucci demonstrates a holistic approach through its Changemakers program and targeted disability inclusion initiatives –

with efforts that span the entire value chain (Gucci, 2024). What distinguishes these strategies is both their structural depth and narrative authenticity. Gucci's campaign with Ellie Goldstein - one of the first luxury campaigns to feature a model with Down syndrome – was praised for storytelling that combined emotional resonance with credible inclusion (Voir Editorial Team, 2020). Studies show that such campaigns boost brand credibility, uniqueness and purchase intention, especially when part of a consistent, coherent brand narrative instead of isolated initiatives (Lee et al., 2024).

Similarly, LVMH's initiative "It's Everyone's Business" frames inclusion as a shared responsibility across functions, from recruitment and marketing to supplier selection, ensuring that DEI is incorporated across operational levels (LVMH, n.D.). Additionally, LVMH has introduced global programs such as "EllesVMH", promoting gender diversity and "Mission Handicap LVMH" which advances disability inclusion across its Maisons. Bulgari complements these efforts by incorporating mandatory bias trainings and non-discriminatory recruitment practises (Bulgari, 2023). Both brands illustrate the potential of accountability mechanisms to institutionalize DEI, rather than relying only on symbolic campaigns (Bulgari, n.D.).

Other luxury industries have adopted more inclusive practices: Rolls-Royce - traditionally synonymous with heritage and exclusivity - has embedded diversity through leadership KPIs, data-driven monitoring and inclusive recruitment programs – earning recognition as part of the Financial Times / Statista Diversity Leaders ranking (Pfeifer, 2024).

Taken together, these initiatives show how DEI can be incorporated in luxury brands, particularly when efforts are structurally embedded, supported by clear responsibilities and aligned with the brand's broader narrative. However, such approaches remain uncommon rather than the norm and many luxury brands still rely on isolated or symbolic initiatives. Without substantive embedding, the risk of consumer scepticism and reputational backlash increases – as the following section illustrates.

2.3.4. Backlashes and Controversies

Even with more meaningful DEI initiatives emerging within the sector, many luxury brands continue to face criticism when their efforts are perceived as superficial or not deeply embedded, resulting in consumer backlash and reputational harm. The following cases demonstrate how poorly executed DEI efforts can backfire.

One well-known example is Gucci's 2018 controversy, when the brand released a sweater that sparked outrage for resembling blackface imagery, causing immediate backlash globally and resulting in boycotts and reputational harm (Danziger, 2019). In response, Gucci implemented structural initiatives like its Changemakers program and internal bias training – following significant damage to its reputation (Doyle, 2024).

That same year, Dolce & Gabbana faced a crisis after launching a campaign in China that featured culturally stereotyped portrayals of Chinese consumers. The campaign was widely condemned as racially insensitive, leading to withdrawn partnerships and cancelled runway shows (Danziger, 2019). In 2021, Dior had to withdraw it's "We are the Land" campaign following accusations of cultural appropriation by Indigenous communities. The brand did not collaborate with the represented group, which led to perceptions of the campaign as extractive and inauthentic (Doyle, 2024).

In 2024, Chanel featured Lupita Nyong'o as the first Black woman to close a Paris runway show. The moment was celebrated for its visibility and symbolic significance but also led to discussions about the need to translate representation into lasting structural change. It later drew criticism for lacking substantive follow-through, as diversity within the brand's creative leadership remained limited (Adamson, 2024). This case shows how symbolic gestures, when not reinforced by meaningful internal measures, can create accusations of 'woke-washing' and raise questions about a brand's authenticity and long-term commitment to inclusion. Research shows that violations of authenticity expectations undermine trust and trigger negative consumer responses, which is why consumer backlash is often linked to perceptions of brand sincerity and long-term ethical alignment (Morhart et al., 2014).

Similar dynamics are seen in the case of Burberry: in 2019, the British luxury brand was criticised for presenting a hoodie with noose-like drawstrings at London Fashion Week, as this design was widely criticised as culturally insensitive for evoking lynching symbolism and racial violence – leading to online backlash and causing the brand to withdraw the product (Vänskä & Gurova, 2021). According to Danziger (2019), such crises often reveal underlying cultural blind spots within luxury houses, encouraging companies to adopt more sustainable and structurally grounded DEI practices.

A particularly illustrative case is Jaguar's 2024 rebranding campaign, which emphasized DEI signals through a bold, identity-centred aesthetic. Although the campaign aimed to modernize the brand and appeal to younger, progressive consumers, it sparked political controversy and public backlash, with some accusing Jaguar of pushing a woke agenda (Danziger, 2024). The rebranding shifted attention away from Jaguar's automotive legacy and core product strengths – creating an impression of inauthenticity and disconnection from the brand's heritage. Critics argued that the focus on external messaging came at the expense of genuine internal change (Gabbat, 2024).

Overall, these examples reveal that DEI efforts in luxury are highly sensitive to how they are incorporated and communicated into the brand. This highlights the importance of examining consumer evaluation processes in the following chapter.

2.4 Consumer Behaviour Theories

As stated by Ajzen (1991), consumer behaviour theories explain how individuals develop attitudes and make purchasing decisions based on cognitive beliefs, emotional evaluations and socially established values. According to his framework, attitudes and intentions are shaped by underlying evaluative and normative beliefs, meaning that in contexts where ethics and values are particularly important, social expectations and ethical considerations play a significant role. In settings influenced by social or ethical issues, emotional responses like pride, trust or guilt have a stronger impact on consumer judgment (Henning et. al., 2012). Morhart et al. (2014) note that perceptions of authenticity can strengthen emotional brand attachment and trust, particularly when brand values align with personal or social values.

Understanding these processes in the context of luxury is particularly important, since consumption is strongly motivated by symbolic meaning, emotional value and normative social influences (Han et al., 2010). Accordingly, luxury consumers may be especially responsive to social and ethical cues and these theoretical perspectives help explain how DEI signals may influence evaluations of luxury brands.

2.4.1 How Identity shapes Luxury Consumption

Social Identity Theory describes how individuals define themselves through social group affiliations and tend to engage with brands that reflect or reinforce those group identities (McGowan et al., 2016). In luxury contexts, both self-identity – referring to personal expression – and social identity, relating to group belonging, play a central role in shaping consumers' purchase intentions. As shown by Salem and Salem (2018), these identity dimensions influence brand attitudes and subjective norms, which in turn drive luxury-related behaviour.

Social identity especially contributes to a sense of normative expectation: consumers may be more inclined to purchase from luxury brands that reflect the values of their reference group, such as diversity, inclusive leadership, or progressive aesthetics (Salem & Salem, 2018). In contrast, self-identity fosters emotional attachment by allowing individuals to express who they are or aspire to be through their brand choices. This is especially relevant when DEI is reflected in the brand's creative direction – such as design, advertising or cultural output (Salem & Salem, 2018).

A critical mechanism in this process is identity congruence: when consumers perceive a strong match between a brand's values and their own personal or social values, they are more likely to develop emotional attachment and more favorable brand attitudes (Morhart et al., 2014), which can translate into stronger purchase intentions (Ajzen, 1991). DEI signals in creative roles (e.g. a queer designer) can create self-expressive alignment, positioning the brand as an extension of the consumer's identity (Raimondo et al., 2022). By contrast, DEI cues in management roles tend to signal institutional commitments like fairness or transparency, which relate more to trust formation rooted in social identity (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

Finally, luxury brands that actively and visibly promote inclusive leadership or diverse representation have been found to appeal to identity-conscious consumers, particularly among younger demographics and marginalized communities (Salem & Salem, 2018).)

2.4.2 DEI as a Brand Signal

Signaling theory suggests that brands communicate unobservable attributes – such as creativity, innovation, or ethical commitment – through visible cues embedded in design, messaging, or representation (Berger & Ward, 2010). In line with Social Identity Theory, signaling functions as a mechanism that allows brands to convey identity meanings to in-groups and out-groups, enabling consumers to communicate who they are and which social groups they associate with (Raimondo et al., 2022).

Within luxury markets, signaling plays a central role, as consumers depend on symbolic cues to interpret brand meaning, cultural capital and social position (Berger & Ward, 2010). Han et al. (2010) distinguish between quiet and loud brand signals. While quiet signals refer to being subtle and mostly understood by culturally informed consumers, loud signals are more visible and easily identifiable to a broader audience. Therefore, the impact of such signals depends on two critical factors: visibility and the audience's ability to decode the signal.

In the context of DEI communication, such cues can serve as value-based brand signals by making otherwise unobservable organizational practices visible to consumers. For instance, culturally aware consumers may resonate with quiet DEI signals – such as the understated inclusion of a People of Color (POC) creative director – and perceive them as signs of authenticity, artistic depth, and meaningful commitment, whereas loud DEI signals, including public DEI statements or CSR campaigns, may attract more aspirational consumers by signaling the brand's commitment to ethical principles or inclusivity agenda (Han et al., 2010). Despite not typically being a primary driver in luxury purchases, consumers might still view DEI representation as a sign of moral integrity, cultural sophistication or contemporary value orientation (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

In luxury branding, DEI in creative roles (e.g., inclusive artistic direction) may signal innovation, originality, and aesthetic openness, traits often associated with brand distinctiveness (Raimondo et al., 2022). By reinforcing perceptions of relevance and identity alignment, such creative signals also affect how the brand is understood in terms of its values and overall positioning. Meanwhile, diversity in management roles may convey values such as fairness or governance quality but may be perceived as less closely tied to the emotional and symbolic depth associated with DEI representation within creative roles (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

2.4.3. Evaluating Brand Attitudes

As defined by Cohen et al. (1972), the expectancy-value theory suggests that attitudes result from the combination of how strongly a person believes certain attributes apply to an object and how positively or negatively those attributes are evaluated. Applied to branding, consumers form brand attitudes by considering not only practical benefits but also alignment with emotional values, personal identity and ethical principles such as inclusion or sustainability (Raj et al., 2018).

In luxury contexts, the formation of attitudes is often more affected by symbolic and emotional attributes, while functional and ethical considerations tend to become more relevant for long-term relationships (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). As brand attitude is a key factor in determining purchase intentions, DEI signals may translate into more positive behavioural intentions (Spears & Singh, 2004).

Within this evaluative process, DEI signals (e.g., diverse leadership, inclusive design) can function as positively evaluated brand attributes that shape overall brand attitude when they resonate with social and personal values (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Apart from emotional and normative mechanisms, visible diversity can also function as a social signal: consumers may perceive diverse teams as better understanding different viewpoints, which can influence ethical brand evaluations in luxury contexts and foster trust and more positive attitudes (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

When personal beliefs and values are consistent, attitudes toward inclusive and ethical brand attributes can strongly predict purchase intentions and behaviour (Rozenkowska, 2023). Brand choices can be viewed as the result of aggregated value perceptions across multiple attributes (Cohen et al., 1972). In luxury contexts, symbolic and emotional value dimensions often play a decisive role (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012), while ethical considerations may also shape evaluations among consumers who are value-conscious (Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2015).

2.4.4 From Attitudes to Purchase Intentions

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) explains consumer behaviour through three factors: attitude toward the behaviour, perceived social norms, and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1991). This makes TPB particularly relevant for the luxury industry, where purchasing decisions are closely connected to symbolic value, social evaluation and identity expression – highlighting the important role of attitudes in shaping purchase intentions (Rozenkowska, 2023). According to Ajzen (1991), perceived behavioural control describes how easy or difficult individuals believe a behaviour will be to perform, based on their perceived capabilities and external constraints. Within the TPB framework, behaviour depends on both intentions and perceived control: intentions lead to action only when individuals feel capable.

However, when applied to luxury consumption, perceived control is shaped by different factors than everyday purchasing contexts. Luxury products are high-involvement purchases that require financial and emotional investment, difficult to access due to limited availability and controlled distribution (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). Consequently, this concept reflects consumers' perceived ability or readiness to commit to a high-value purchase, as opposed to situational ease or availability.

Intention-behaviour gaps have also been noted in domains such as ethical consumption, where positive attitudes do not always result in action (Carrington et al., 2010; Sudbury-Riley & Kohlbacher, 2015). Within luxury contexts, such gaps are more likely to be caused by perceived risk and commitment than convenience-related barriers. Therefore, strengthening value alignment and minimizing uncertainty around purchase decisions may be crucial (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). As mentioned earlier, DEI signals may support this process within high-involvement luxury contexts by enhancing perceived authenticity and fostering brand trust, which have been linked to stronger purchase intentions (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

Together, these theoretical perspectives provide a foundation for understanding how DEI-related signals may shape luxury brand evaluations and purchasing behaviour.

2.5 Synthesis and Research Gap

2.5.1 Summary of Key Insights

The literature review reveals that Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion has shifted from primarily being framed as a moral concern to being recognized as a strategic element of brand management, linked to changes in societal norms and consumer expectations (Ferraro et al., 2022). It is associated with higher innovation potential, stronger brand credibility, and improved business performance (Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020; Clarke, 2023). These trends are particularly evident among value-driven consumers, for whom authenticity and social responsibility have become important brand attributes (Ferraro et al., 2022).

Rather than focusing on general DEI definitions, prior literature shows that it matters how and where diversity becomes visible within organizations. Different roles come with different levels of visibility and symbolic significance, potentially influencing how consumers perceive DEI initiatives. Management positions reflect internal structure and long-term commitment (Khan & Kalra, 2022), while creative roles often shape a brand's visible, symbolic and expressive dimensions and identity (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Due to these disparities in visibility and meaning, representation in creative and management positions can lead to different consumer perceptions. This is particularly important in the luxury sector, where brand evaluation is strongly shaped by symbolic cues and creative direction (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

DEI further functions at multiple organisational levels, addressing both internal aspects such as hiring and leadership, as well as external communication through branding and creative storytelling (Ferraro et al., 2022). According to prior research, these layers do not always align, and depending on how consistent DEI implementation appears across the organization – leading to different consumer responses (Ferraro et al., 2022). Within the context of luxury brands, brand meaning is closely connected to heritage, exclusivity and creative expression, reinforced through controlled storytelling (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

Building on this, creative departments are particularly relevant in luxury branding, as they shape the brand's visual identity and narrative direction, which are central to how luxury brands are perceived by consumers (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Representation in these roles can therefore act as a signal of openness, originality and cultural awareness. In contrast, diversity in management roles is often associated with perceptions of institutional trust and long-term credibility. Both areas are linked to different consumer expectations and evaluative processes (Khan & Kalra, 2022).

However, previous studies have shown that consumers respond differently to DEI signals in luxury settings. While some research connects visible diversity to more positive evaluations by strengthening moral perceptions and brand trust, (Khan & Kalra, 2022), in luxury contexts such effects may depend on perceived fit, as inconsistent or poorly integrated DEI communication which can cause scepticism when it appears misaligned with established brand identities (Ferraro et al. 2022). Consequently, the contrasting findings suggest that consumers may interpret DEI signals differently depending on which organizational role diversity becomes visible, how it is communicated and the extent to which the function of that role is linked to shaping the brand's core identity.

Consumer behaviour theories propose that consumer evaluations are shaped by identity processes, perceived signals, and the formation of attitudes and purchase intentions. Given the importance of reputation, status and credibility in luxury consumption, consumers may pay special attention to signals that point to coherence and consistency (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012). From this perspective, several psychological mechanisms may influence how luxury brands are evaluated. Diversity signals may enhance identity congruence and strengthen perceptions of authenticity and trust, potentially leading to more positive brand attitudes, given that it is understood as consistent with the brand's symbolic meaning (Morhart et al., 2014; Salem & Salem, 2018).

According to expectancy-value theory and TPB, such positive evaluations are more likely to translate into higher purchase intentions, particularly in luxury settings, where consumer brand attitudes are essential in guiding consumer behaviour (Cohen et al., 1972; Ajzen, 1991). Moreover, consumer reactions to DEI cues may differ based on social identity and how well the brand's values align with consumers' own identities (Salem & Salem, 2018).

2.5.2 Limitations and Research Gap

Despite a growing number of research on DEI in branding, several contradictions and limitations remain. While many studies emphasize its benefits for creativity, innovation, and performance (Hewlett et al., 2013; Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020), implementation and communication are often perceived as superficial – especially in the luxury sector (Ferraro et al., 2022; Shoaib, 2025).

A central limitation of current literature is the limited differentiation between employee roles. Most studies examine DEI on a general organizational level or focus primarily on external, consumer-facing representation, without explicitly distinguishing where within the organization diversity becomes visible; at the same time, the communication of hiring-related DEI signals remains underexplored within luxury branding.

Although prior research suggests that creative and managerial roles differ in their organizational functions, little is known about whether consumers interpret DEI signals differently across these roles in the specific context of luxury. Building on this, a significant conceptual gap persists: consumer perceptions on DEI may differ depending on whether it is incorporated within creative or management roles and how such signal is communicated.

Consequently, the organisational role in which diversity is incorporated and communicated represents a theoretically grounded boundary condition, but its effects on consumer evaluations in luxury branding have yet to be empirically examined.

2.5.3 Research Question and Hypotheses

Given the mixed findings in prior research and the identified research gap, this section develops the research question and hypotheses which guide the present study. The primary focus lies on the role-specific interpretation of DEI signals in the context of luxury branding. While some studies have primarily examined whether incorporating DEI in branding leads to generally positive or negative consumer responses, fewer studies have addressed a more nuanced question that is particularly relevant in the context of luxury branding: does consumer response to DEI depend on the employee role through which diversity becomes visible?

Based on these considerations, the following research question is proposed:

How does the presence of diverse team members influence brand perceptions in luxury brands, and to what extent do these effects differ between creative and management roles?

Theoretically, DEI can act as a signal that communicates value-based meanings and affect consumer brand perceptions (Berger & Wand, 2010). According to previous studies, such cues can positively influence brand perceptions, especially when they are consistent with broader societal expectations and consumer values (Khan & Kalra, 2022). Nevertheless, existing literature also emphasizes that the effectiveness of DEI signals varies based on their interpretation within the context of a specific brand.

In luxury branding, where brand value is strongly connected to symbolism and carefully curated brand narratives (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012), the evaluation of diversity-related cues may differ depending on the employee role in which they are embedded. Creative and management teams carry different identity-related associations and responsibilities, shaping the perception of DEI initiatives (Khan & Kalra, 2022). This leads to the expectation of a general effect of DEI communication through hiring, with effects likely differing based on whether diversity is incorporated within creative or management roles. Given that brand differentiation and uniqueness represent core dimensions of luxury brand identity, creative roles play a key role in shaping distinctive approaches that enable luxury brands to differentiate themselves within the luxury market. Therefore, diversity signals embedded in creative roles may lead to stronger positive consumer responses compared to those incorporated in management positions. At the same time, the literature indicates that DEI signals may be viewed more critically when they are perceived as conflicting with exclusivity expectations and brand identity.

Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Consumers have more positive brand perceptions and higher purchase intentions for luxury brands when diversity (vs. no diversity) in hiring is communicated.

H2: Consumers have more positive brand perceptions and higher purchase intentions for luxury brands when diversity (vs. no diversity) is incorporated within creative (vs. management) teams.

These hypotheses seek to explore the moderating effect of employee role on the relationship between internal diversity and consumer responses, offering a more differentiated understanding of DEI integration in luxury branding contexts.

2.6 Conceptual Framework

This section presents the conceptual model that forms the foundation of the study. It connects the research gap to the main, theoretical constructs and explains their conceptual relationship. It outlines the theoretical grounding for the proposed hypotheses and the structure of the empirical investigation.

2.6.1 Conceptualization of DEI Signals

This study conceptualizes Diversity, Equity and Inclusion as a brand signal that forms consumer brand perceptions by communicating value alignment, symbolic brand positioning and long-term commitment. Rather than only functioning as an internal practice, DEI is seen as an external signal that shapes how consumers interpret a luxury brand, given its defining characteristics (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

The framework focuses on identity-based forms of DEI, as they are closely linked to social values and therefore can have a significant impact on brand perceptions. Such signals are assumed to affect consumer responses by conveying ethical or progressive values, while also interacting with identity-related expectations and perceptions of authenticity (Arsel et al., 2021). It is important to note that DEI signals are not interpreted in isolation but in relation to the organizational context in which they become visible, by differentiating between various employee roles through which diversity may be communicated.

In general, this conceptual framework assumes that how consumers react to DEI communication in luxury branding is influenced by both the presence of identity-based diversity and inclusion and the organizational function through which these signals are conveyed. These assumptions create the theoretical basis for the empirical design and guide the development of the hypotheses examined in the following sections.

2.6.2 Outcome Dimensions

Building on this, the theoretical framework focuses on key consumer responses that capture evaluative and behavioural dimensions of brand perceptions, which are crucial for understanding how consumers perceive DEI signals in luxury branding contexts.

Brand Attitude refers to consumers' overall affective and cognitive evaluation of a brand. It is a well-established measure in experimental branding research (Spears & Singh, 2004) and particularly relevant in DEI contexts where signals of diversity and inclusion can strengthen perceptions of emotional appeal, value alignment, and trust. According to prior research, ethical brand cues can enhance perceived brand quality and emotional appeal, thereby increasing the brand's overall likeability (Ferraro et al., 2022).

Perceived brand innovativeness indicates how consumer view a brand's ability to introduce new, meaningful and relevant solutions (Shams et al., 2015). It captures the extent to which brand is viewed as being forward-thinking, original and able to adapt to evolving societal and market expectations. This concept is grounded in prior research, suggesting that internal diversity and inclusive environments can improve the innovative capacity of a brand (Shams et al., 2015; Dixon-Fyle et al., 2020). When communicated externally, DEI may signal openness and progressiveness, leading to increased brand innovativeness. Within the luxury segment, brand value is defined by core elements such as symbolic relevance and creative distinction, making innovativeness a meaningful outcome dimension (Debenedetti et al., 2024).

Purchase intention reflects consumers’ self-reported likelihood to purchase from or support a brand (Spears & Singh, 2004). Unlike other outcome dimensions, it is more behaviourally oriented and therefore not viewed as a direct response to DEI communication, but rather as a downstream effect that may depend on the perceived relevance, credibility and alignment of luxury brand messages with consumers’ values and identity expectations. Recent studies suggest that perceptions of authenticity, emotional resonance, and brand fit play an important role in translating favorable brand evaluations into purchase motivation (Bagozzi et al., 2016).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

3.1.1 Overview and Experimental Structure

The present study used a quantitative, between-subjects experimental design with a 2 × 2 factorial structure. Two independent variables were manipulated: (1) presence of diversity in the team member profile (diverse vs. non-diverse) and (2) employee role within the organization (creative vs. strategic/management), resulting in four distinct experimental conditions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of these four conditions to minimize selection bias and ensure group equivalence.

Each participant was exposed to one condition, presented as a simulated piece of brand communication. This design tested how diversity presence and employee role within a luxury brand influence consumer perception. Key outcome measures included brand evaluations and attitudinal/behavioural responses, allowing for the assessment of causal relationships between the manipulated variables and consumer responses.

All participants were presented with a standardized press release from *Nayara*, a fictitious luxury brand. The decision to use a fictional brand was based on methodological and theoretical reasons: to avoid pre-existing brand associations, ensure a neutral baseline, maintain full control over stimulus variables, and reduce responses influenced by strong opinions toward real brands. This aligns with best practices in consumer psychology research (Forehand & Grier, 2003).

The content was carefully constructed to resemble a typical brand announcement introducing a new team member, varied across two dimensions:

- **Diversity Type**: In the diverse condition, the press release explicitly referred to the employee's gender identity, described as a transgender woman. For example, the text stated: "*This season, the brand hired Elena, a transgender designer, for the position of creative director on their design team"* (see Appendix A). In the non-diverse condition, the employee was described without any reference to diversity-related characteristics (i.e. in neutral, identity-unspecific language): "*This season, the brand hired Elena, a designer, for the position of creative director on their design team."*
- **Employee Role**: The new employee was either introduced in a creative role (i.e., *Creative Director*) or a strategic/managerial role (i.e. *Executive*). In the creative

condition, the employee was framed as holding a position associated with artistic vision and creative direction, whereas in the management condition, the employee was framed as holding a strategic leadership role focused on organizational decision-making.

To reinforce the textual manipulation, each version of the press release was accompanied by a visual stimulus: a professionally edited photograph of the fictional employee, named Elena. All images were matched closely in terms of facial expression, clothing, body posture, and background setting to reduce the likelihood of unintended confounding variables. Diversity was visually cued through appearance and gender expression in line with the textual description (Figure 2; Appendix A).

Figure 1. Visual stimuli used in the experimental conditions.
Source: Own Illustration

The visual and textual stimuli were embedded in a standardized layout, including consistent use of font, colour scheme, logo placement, and formatting. This ensured internal validity and controlled for variation in design elements. The overall stimulus format was intended to mimic authentic brand communication, increasing ecological validity and enhancing participant engagement. Vignette-based designs are established in experimental consumer research for examining subtle effects of social perception in branding (Aguinis & Bradley, 2014).

3.1.2 Measured Variables

The primary dependent variables in this study were established constructs in branding research:

- Brand Attitude, measured using the scale by Spears & Singh (2004)
- Brand Innovativeness, assessed based on the instrument developed by Shams et al. (2015)
- Purchase Intention, also measured following Spears & Singh (2004)

In addition to these core variables, a set of exploratory measures was included to capture perceptions of the portrayed employee, including perceived competence, trustworthiness, and creativity. These provide further insight into how diversity and role framing may influence person-related judgments beyond brand-level outcomes. The full questionnaire, including all item wordings and response scales is provided in Appendix B.

3.2 Data Collection

3.2.1 Sampling

Data collection took place between May 26 and June 22, 2025. In total, 234 responses were recorded via an online survey. After applying a predefined exclusion criterion, the final sample comprised N = 176 participants. Responses were excluded if participants left substantial parts of the survey incomplete or filled out the questionnaire in an unusually short amount of time, indicating low engagement.

Participants were recruited through personal networks and social media, including family members, friends, colleagues, university group chats and friends-of-friends, as well as broader outreach via Instagram Stories. This approach provided a broad, heterogeneous adult sample with varying levels of interest in luxury. The target group was the general adult population, supporting a more naturalistic consumer sample and enhancing external validity.

The demographic profile of the final sample was as follows: The mean age was 28.04 years (SD = 10.23), and the gender distribution included 65.3% female, 32.9% male, and 1.8% identifying as non-binary or another gender identity. In terms of employment status, approximately 67% were employed, 11% were students, and 7% were unemployed at the time of participation. To assess subjective socioeconomic status (SES), participants rated their social standing on a 7-point Likert scale. The average SES rating was M = 2.96, suggesting that most participants perceived themselves as belonging to a lower- to middle-income group (Appendix D1). Additionally, participants reported their overall interest in luxury brands and luxury purchase frequency. Overall, luxury interest was moderate (M = 3.97, SD = 1.90), while purchase frequency was slightly lower (M = 3.75, SD = 1.17) (Appendix D2). Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions, with the group sizes varying across conditions (Appendix D3). A manipulation check confirmed that the majority of participants correctly identified the diversity and role manipulation (Appendix D4).

Before the main study, the first five participants from the researcher's close network completed the survey. Their feedback confirmed that the manipulations were understood, and the stimuli appeared realistic. Minor adjustments were made, including a closing statement clarifying the fictional nature of the brand. These responses were retained in the final dataset. Descriptive statistics for the final analytical sample are summarized in Appendix D.

3.2.2 Survey Structure and Procedure

The study was conducted online using the Qualtrics platform, which ensured data security and compliance with GDPR regulations. Participants accessed the survey via a public link and were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental conditions in the 2 × 2 design. The estimated duration of the full survey was approximately two to three minutes.

The structure of the survey was as follows:

1. **Informed consent**: participants read a GDPR-compliant form outlining the study purpose, data protection, and anonymity measures. The study was carried out in accordance with ethical standards and participation was voluntary and anonymous. No personal or identifying data were collected, and all data handling complied with GDPR and university ethics guidelines. For sensitive demographic questions such as gender or income, a "prefer not to answer" option was provided. Inclusive and neutral language was used throughout, and a debriefing was provided at the survey's conclusion.

2. **Random assignment**: Participants were randomly allocated to one of the four experimental conditions.
3. **Stimulus presentation**: Each participant viewed a fictional press release along with a photo of the fictional employee (Elena).
4. **Main dependent variables**: Participants evaluated the brand on the main variables described above using 7-point Likert and bipolar scales. For each of these scales, mean scores were calculated only if participants had answered at least two out of three items. In SPSS, a *"0.99" marker* was used to flag missing responses, ensuring that they were excluded from the mean calculation without affecting scale reliability.
5. **Exploratory employee evaluation**: Participants evaluated the depicted employee on perceived competence, reliability, creativity, and innovativeness.
6. **Manipulation check**: Questions assessed whether participants had correctly perceived the diversity and role framing (see Appendix B).
7. **Luxury interest**: Participants indicated their general interest in luxury brands and products.
8. **Demographic information**: Items included age, gender, education, employment status, and income.
9. **Luxury consumption frequency**: Participants reported how often they engage with or purchase luxury products.
10. **Debriefing**: A closing statement informed participants that the scenario and brand were fictional and created solely for research purposes.

3.3 Data Analysis

3.3.1 Statistical Methods

To test the main hypotheses, the data from the 2 × 2 between-subjects design were examined using two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs), corresponding to the experimental design outlined in Section 3.1. The two independent variables were Diversity Type (diverse vs. non-diverse) and Employee Role (creative vs. management).

Hypothesis 1 tested the main effects of diversity type on brand innovativeness, brand attitude, and purchase intention. These three variables represented the key brand-related outcome measures. Hypothesis 2 focused on the moderating effect of employee role and analysed the interaction effects between diversity type and employee role on the same dependent variables.

In addition to testing the primary outcome variables, a series of exploratory ANOVAs were conducted to examine participant evaluations of the fictional employee. These analyses focused on specific traits such as competence, creativity, and other role-related qualities. While these were outside the main hypotheses, they provided further insight into how the employee's identity and role may shape social impressions beyond the brand level (Appendix E).

To further investigate specific patterns within the data, item-level ANOVAs were also conducted on the level of individual scale items. The main analyses were complemented by follow-up ANCOVAs controlling for participant-level characteristics, including age, gender, subjective socioeconomic status, and self-reported interest in luxury brands. This approach tested whether the observed effects could still be attributed to the manipulated variables after accounting for individual differences. Interactions between covariates and manipulated variables were not examined (Appendix F).

3.3.2 Use of Covariates

To strengthen the validity of the results and account for potential confounding factors, follow-up ANCOVAs (analyses of covariance) were performed in addition to the main ANOVAs. The goal of these analyses was to examine whether the observed effects of diversity and employee role on brand-related outcomes remained stable after statistically controlling for individual-level characteristics. A comparison of ANOVA and ANCOVA results is also reported in Appendix G4.

The following covariates were included in the models:

- **Age**, as brand perceptions and openness to diversity may vary across life stages
- **Gender**, to account for possible gender-based differences in perception and evaluation
- **Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SES),** measured via a self-placement on a 7-point Likert scale
- **Self-reported interest in luxury brands**, assessed to control for baseline involvement and motivation in the product category

These covariates were chosen based on theoretical and empirical evidence that individual characteristics can influence brand perceptions in diversity contexts. The analyses focused solely on adjusted main effects; no interactions with covariates were tested.

3.3.3 Software and Reporting Standards

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics, a widely used and established software package in behavioural science research. A significance threshold of $\alpha = .05$ was applied consistently across all hypothesis tests.

Effect sizes were calculated as *partial eta squared* (η^2) for all ANOVA and ANCOVA models, implying the proportion of variance explained by each factor. All results were reported according to APA guidelines (7th edition), including F-values, degrees of freedom, p-values, and effect sizes. Statistical symbols such as M, SD, F, p, and η^2 were used consistently throughout and are listed in the Abbreviation List. Where applicable, non-significant results were reported to ensure transparency.

The internal consistency of all multi-item scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. All constructs met the commonly accepted reliability ($\alpha > .70$). A detailed overview of reliability coefficients and sample items is provided in Appendix C.

Where necessary, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) supported the interpretation of the results. Rounding conventions followed standard APA style, with values typically reported to two decimal places.

4. Results

This chapter presents the results of the experimental study described in Chapter 3. Based on a 2×2 between-subjects design, the analysis assesses how diversity type (diverse vs. non-diverse) and employee role (creative vs. management) influence consumer responses toward a fictional luxury brand.

Following reliability checks of the applied scales, the main section reports the results of a series of ANOVAs and ANCOVAs for the key dependent variables: brand attitude, brand innovativeness, and purchase intention. In addition, an exploratory employee evaluation scale was used to capture perceptions of the featured team member.

Prior to the main analyses, the assumptions of ANOVA and ANCOVA were checked (Appendix F5). Levene's test confirmed homogeneity of variances for most dependent variables ($p > .05$), except for purchase intention ($p = .008$). Given the sample size ($N = 176$) and balanced group design, parametric analysis was considered appropriate despite minor deviations (Field, 2017).

Further analyses included descriptive comparisons across experimental conditions and reported correlational analyses among all main constructs.

4.1 Descriptive Overview

Before the main analysis, descriptive comparisons were made across the four experimental conditions. Overall, the Diverse + Creative condition achieved the highest mean scores across most dependent variables, particularly for perceived brand innovativeness. While these differences were not statistically significant in the interaction tests, the observed patterns showed a consistent distribution across conditions, with higher mean values in the Diverse + Creative condition compared to management roles and non-diverse conditions.

Visual inspection of the estimated marginal means showed a similar pattern, especially for innovation-related outcomes. The consistently higher means in the Diverse + Creative group reflect a descriptive trend, although this did not manifest in a statistically significant interaction.

Given that none of the interaction effects between diversity type and employee role reached statistical significance, no simple effects or post-hoc comparisons were performed. This approach follows common statistical guidance, which recommends further subgroup analyses only in the presence of significant interactions (Field, 2017).

4.2 Correlations

To examine relationships between the key DVs, "Pearson correlation coefficients" were calculated. Perceived brand innovativeness, brand attitude and purchase intention were strongly intercorrelated, ranging from $r = .62$ to $.74$ ($p < .001$) (Appendix G5), suggesting that these measures may reflect a shared evaluative response to the brand stimulus. For example, the correlation between innovativeness and purchase intention reached $r = .74$, indicating a substantial link between how original the brand was perceived to be and participants' intention to purchase. These strong interrelations support the construct validity of the dependent measures, as they are theoretically expected to co-occur in consumer evaluations.

Moderate associations were also found between employee evaluation and the main outcome variables ($r = .39 – .51$) (Appendix G5), suggesting that participants' impressions of the featured employee had a meaningful, though somewhat weaker link to how they judged the brand. However, luxury interest and demographic variables (i.e. age, gender, SES) revealed only weak or non-significant correlations with the DVs. This indicates that the observed results were not mainly driven by pre-existing tendencies or sociodemographic characteristics.

4.3 Main Effects (2x2 ANOVA)

4.3.1 Brand Innovativeness

A two-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of diversity type (diverse vs. non-diverse) and employee role (creative vs. management) on perceived brand innovativeness. The final sample size was $N = 176$, after excluding 58 participants due to substantial missing data and unusually short completion times.

The analysis revealed a statistically significant main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 166) = 11.16$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .063$ (Appendix E1). Participants exposed to the diverse condition rated the brand as significantly more innovative (M = 4.94, SD = 1.28) than participants in the non-diverse condition (M = 4.20, SD = 1.28). In contrast, the main effect of employee role was not significant, F (1, 166) = 0.26, p = .61, suggesting that perceived brand innovativeness did not differ depending on whether the employee was introduced as a creative professional (M = 4.60, SD = 1.32) or as part of the management team (M = 4.56, SD = 1.34). Descriptive mean values are aggregated across the respective other factors and reported in Appendix D5.

The interaction between diversity type and employee role was also not significant, F (1, 166) = 0.01, p = .94. This indicates that the effect of diversity on perceived innovativeness was consistent across both employee roles, with no evidence of moderation. An exploratory inspection of the individual items further suggests that the diversity effect was strongest for idea-related aspects of innovation, whereas operational aspects showed a weaker pattern. Detailed item-level outputs are reported in Appendix G3.

Figure 3 (see below) presents the estimated marginal means for each condition, including 95% confidence intervals. The visual pattern further supports the absence of an interaction and illustrates the overall higher ratings in the diverse condition, irrespective of role framing. These findings support H1 regarding brand innovativeness, but do not provide evidence for H2.

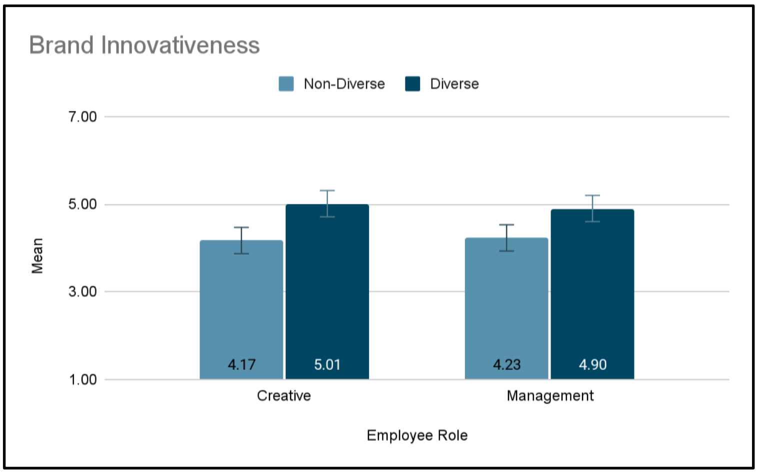


Figure 2. Brand innovativeness by diversity type and employee role
Source: Own illustration

4.3.2 Brand Attitude

The same ANOVA procedure was applied to assess participants' brand attitude ratings. The analysis revealed a marginal main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 155) = 3.76$, $p = .054$, $\eta^2 = .024$ (Appendix E2). Participants rated the brand more favorably in the diverse condition ($M = 5.54$, $SD = 1.29$) than in the non-diverse condition ($M = 5.12$, $SD = 1.30$) (Appendix D5). Although this difference did not reach conventional levels of statistical significance, it suggests a trend toward more positive brand attitudes in response to visible diversity.

The main effect of employee role was not statistically significant, $F(1, 155) = 1.03$, $p = .31$, indicating that participants' brand attitudes did not differ based on whether the employee was introduced in a creative ($M = 5.41$, $SD = 1.33$) or managerial role ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.28$) (Appendix D5). The interaction between diversity type and employee role was also non-significant, $F(1, 155) = 0.79$, $p = .38$ (Figure 4, Appendix E2), indicating that the employee's role did not moderate the effect of diversity on brand attitude. These results do not offer clear support for H1 and provide no support for H2.

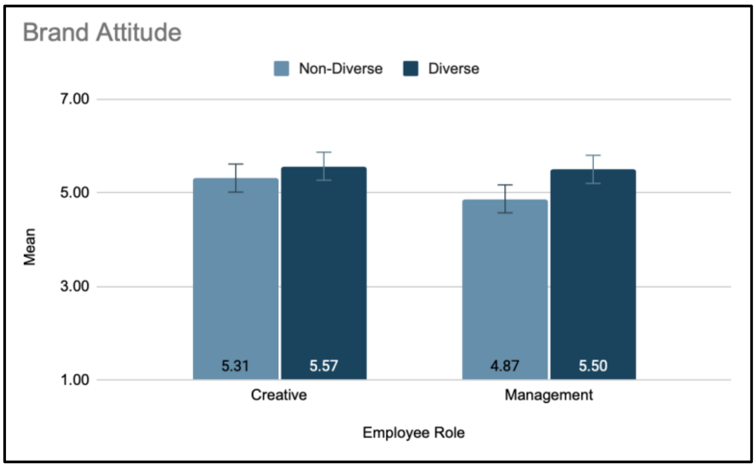


Figure 3. Brand attitude by diversity type and employee role
Source: Own illustration

4.3.3 Purchase Intention

To assess whether diversity type and employee role influenced participants' intention to purchase from the brand, the same ANOVA procedure was applied. The analysis revealed no significant main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 163) = 1.01$, $p = .32$ (Appendix E3). Participants in the diverse condition reported comparable purchase intentions ($M = 4.34$, $SD = 1.61$) to those in the non-diverse condition ($M = 4.08$, $SD = 1.46$) (Appendix D5), suggesting that visible diversity did not significantly impact participants' likelihood to buy from the brand.

The main effect of employee role was also not significant, $F(1, 163) = 1.11$, $p = .29$, showing no meaningful difference in purchase intention between the creative ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.59$) and managerial ($M = 4.11$, $SD = 1.50$) role conditions (Appendix D5). Similarly, the interaction between diversity type and employee role was not significant, $F(1, 163) = 0.05$, $p = .82$ (Appendix E3), demonstrating that the combination of diversity and role framing had no interactive effect on participants' purchase intentions. These findings do not support H1 or H2 in the context of purchase intentions.

4.3.4 Employee Evaluation

To capture a broad impression of the employee's qualities, participants rated their perceptions across four traits – *competence, reliability, creativity, and innovativeness* – which were aggregated into a single evaluation score. The same ANOVA procedure was applied to test for effects of diversity type and employee role on this composite measure. The analysis revealed no significant main effect of diversity type, $F(1, 164) = 0.79$, $p = .38$ (Appendix E4). Participants in the diverse condition rated the employee similarly to those in the non-diverse condition ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.16$ vs. $M = 4.88$, $SD = 1.18$) (Appendix D5).

In addition, the main effect of employee role was not statistically significant, $F(1, 164) = 1.41$, $p = .24$ (Appendix E4). Evaluations of the employee did not differ meaningfully between the creative ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.21$) and management role conditions ($M = 4.80$, $SD = 1.12$) (Appendix D5). The interaction between diversity type and employee role was also not significant, $F(1, 164) = 0.01$, $p = .95$ (Appendix E4), indicating that the combination of diversity cues and role framing did not jointly affect employee evaluation.

4.4 Controlling for Covariates (ANCOVA)

Controlling for participant-level characteristics including age, gender, (SES) and interest in luxury brands, the main effect of diversity type on brand innovativeness remained statistically significant, $F(1, 160) = 10.56$, $p = .001$, $\eta^2 = .062$ (Appendix F1), implying that the observed difference was robust to the inclusion of these covariates. In contrast, the marginal effect of diversity type on brand attitude was no longer significant when covariates were included, $F(1, 155) = 2.15$, $p = .144$, $\eta^2 = .014$ (Appendix F2). This suggests that the marginal ANOVA effect was not robust when controlling for covariates; no single covariate can be identified as clearly dominant.

The ANCOVA models further showed that purchase intention and employee evaluation remained unaffected by the experimental manipulations. Interactions between covariates and experimental conditions were not examined, as this was not necessary given the absence of significant effects requiring further moderation analysis.

The following chapter discusses these findings in relation to the hypotheses and the broader literature, and outlines their theoretical and practical implications.

5. Discussion

5.1 Summary of Main Findings

This study investigates how the communication of diverse hiring practices affects brand perceptions and purchase intentions, with a particular focus on whether these effects differ depending on the organizational role used to signal DEI. In the luxury context - where brand value is closely linked to creativity, symbolism and carefully curated brand identities - this question is highly relevant, as DEI signals may be interpreted in nuanced ways.

In general, the findings suggest that DEI-related hiring communication can function as a valuable brand signal in the luxury sector, influencing how a brand is evaluated. This is consistent with previous studies that connect DEI signals with perceptions of innovation and forward-thinking brand identities. At the same time, the results imply that such signals may not always result in wider behavioural or evaluative outcomes.

A significant main effect was found for diversity, showing that communicating the hiring of a diverse employee (i.e., either into the design team or management team) increased perceived brand innovativeness within the luxury brand context. In contrast, no significant effects were found for purchase intention or employee evaluation, indicating that the presence of diversity did not meaningfully influence participants' behavioural intentions or perceptions of the individual employee. In addition, the data revealed no interaction between diversity and employee role, suggesting that the impact of diversity was consistent regardless of whether the employee was presented in a creative or managerial role. Furthermore, brand attitude showed a marginally positive trend for diversity; however, this effect disappeared when controlling for demographic covariates.

Therefore, H1 was partially supported: diversity increased perceived brand innovativeness but had no effect on purchase intention. H2 was not supported, as the employee's role did not moderate the effect of diversity on any of the DVs.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

Prior research has explored DEI cues and messages in brand communication, often associating them with perceptions of modernity, social responsibility and innovation. In luxury branding, however, it remains unclear if - and in what way - these signals operate, as they intersect with established associations of exclusivity, heritage and symbolic value. By examining diverse hiring communication in a luxury brand setting, the present study contributes to a better understanding of how DEI cues function as brand signals and where their effect appears the strongest.

First, the significant main effect on perceived brand innovativeness aligns with prior research that has positioned DEI cues as signals of modernity and progressiveness in brand identity. In line with this perspective, the findings indicate that the communication of internal DEI signals can translate into enhanced brand perceptions. This is theoretically significant as luxury brands are traditionally associated with heritage, exclusivity and deeply embedded brand values (Ferraro et al., 2022); therefore, DEI cues might be expected to function differently in this setting. Instead, this result suggests that such signals can be viewed as forward-looking, shaping how consumers evaluate a luxury brand's innovativeness.

Second, the findings support consumer behaviour research by differentiating between perceptual and behavioural responses to DEI communication. While the DEI manipulation led to higher perceived brand innovativeness, the observed effects for purchase intentions or employee evaluation were not significant. The absence of effects on employee evaluation shows that the DEI cue was evaluated on brand-level rather than shaping judgements of the individual employee.

This pattern supports theoretical perspectives suggesting that brand perceptions can be more easily influenced than behavioural intentions - especially in the context of luxury brands, where purchasing decisions are driven by deeper emotional, symbolic and identity-related factors. On the other hand, wider attitudinal responses may be more affected by individual differences, meaning that while consumers may view diversity favourably, such responses are often weak to meaningfully shift brand preferences. As a result, the findings reshape existing assumptions by showing that DEI signals remain at the level of brand perception rather than extending to behavioural outcomes or person-level evaluations. By focusing on communicating hiring with a transgender employee, this study also contributes to DEI research by moving beyond often studied, visually noticeable diversity signals toward a less frequently studied form of representation in the luxury context.

Third, this study builds upon existing research by demonstrating that the effects of DEI communication were independent of the functional role through which diversity was highlighted. Unlike what was expected based on role-specific interpretations of DEI signals

– particularly in luxury branding, where creative roles are often seen as central to brand distinctiveness and originality - diversity had a similar effect regardless of whether the employee was presented in a creative or management position. This reflects that the mere presence of diversity can serve as a distinct signal that shapes brand perceptions of luxury brands, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of how consumers interpret DEI cues in organizational contexts.

Finally, the results provide a broader theoretical contribution by proposing that DEI might increasingly be viewed as a norm rather than an exception, not only in brand communication but also in wider societal expectations. The lack of negative reactions toward diversity cues, despite the traditionally exclusive setting of luxury branding, shows that inclusive hiring practices could be considered a natural and more normalized component of contemporary luxury brand identity. In this sense, diversity and inclusion may not be mainly interpreted as a bold differentiator, but instead reflecting evolving baseline expectations for what defines a modern luxury brand. This interpretation aligns with current shifts in luxury brand discussions, where DEI is progressively treated as a strategic consideration, contributing to ongoing debates about how it should be integrated into organizational and branding practices without undermining established brand identities.

5.3 Practical Implications

Based on the results of this study, several practical implications can be identified for luxury brands. Given that communicating diverse hiring practices increased perceived brand innovativeness, DEI messaging can serve as a strategic tool to indicate modernity and progressive brand values, even within luxury brands that are traditionally conservative. Notably, these effects were observed at the level of brand perception, suggesting that DEI signals might be especially effective in determining evaluations of luxury brands rather than having a direct impact on consumer behaviour.

Additionally, as the findings show that there was no significant difference in consumer perceptions depending on whether diversity was communicated through creative or managerial roles, luxury brands may not need to focus on particular organizational roles, instead, the communicated presence of diversity itself appears sufficient to influence consumer impressions, allowing them to be more flexible in how inclusive hiring practices are presented externally.

From a practical view, these results show the importance for luxury brands to ensure strategic consistency between internal organizational practices and externally communicated DEI signals. While the present study primarily focuses on communication effects, it also suggests that connecting inclusive messaging to wider recruitment and leadership principles may strengthen long-term credibility and support a more transparent communication around inclusive hiring efforts. Therefore, to ensure meaningful impact, DEI initiatives should be incorporated thoughtfully and authentically, taking into account brand-specific contexts such as core values and positioning, as well as consumer expectations.

Furthermore, the absence of effects on purchase intention and employee evaluation emphasizes the need for realistic expectations regarding the impact of DEI communication. Although the integration of DEI signals can enhance brand perceptions, these shifts do not necessarily translate into consumer action and commitment. This also applies to person-level evaluations of individual employees, which might be less affected by DEI-related signals compared to overall brand perceptions. Within the luxury sector, this interpretation suggests that DEI communication should not be considered as a single factor that drives behaviour, but instead as part of a broader and more comprehensive brand strategy.

5.4 Interpreting Unexpected Findings

Despite the positive effect on brand innovativeness, several findings did not fully align with the study's initial expectations - in particular the absence of effects on purchase intention and marginal effect on brand attitude which disappeared once demographic covariates were considered. While it was predicted that more positive brand perceptions would create a domino effect — with increased innovativeness and brand attitude ultimately also boosting consumers' willingness to buy and leading to stronger behavioural intentions, this trend did not occur.

One possible explanation for this perception-behaviour gap, which is observed by prior research (e.g., Spears and Singh, 2004), is that evaluative responses to DEI signals might differ according to individual differences, such as demographic characteristics or levels of brand engagement. As a result, DEI communication can shape how a luxury brand is perceived without necessarily having a consistent impact on overall brand preference purchase intentions. This understanding is still uncertain and underscores the difficulty of translating perception-based effects into behavioural outcomes, particularly in the context of luxury.

Another possible explanation could lie in the limited emotional engagement with the experimental stimuli. Given the abstract nature of the fictional luxury brand and lack of a strong emotional narrative, participants may have found it difficult to connect with the experimental descriptions on a deeper level; this suggests that diversity cues might have created positive, surface-level impressions but without a meaningful context to influence behaviour. Therefore, evaluations related to DEI may stay at a superficial level if they do not align with a larger brand narrative or identity, making this a speculative explanation which may also be influenced by the methodological characteristics of the research design.

Apart from specific mechanisms, the data revealed another unexpected pattern: the absence of negative reactions toward the diverse condition. Participants did not evaluate the diverse employee more negatively across all dependent variables; instead, their responses varied from neutral to positive, indicating that the existence of a transgender employee did not significantly change the evaluation of the luxury brand or the featured person for many participants. One way to interpret this is that, despite the exclusive context of luxury branding, DEI is more and more viewed as normal rather than exceptional. This normalization might clarify why DEI communication improved perceived brand innovativeness by signaling modernity and progressiveness, yet is no longer distinctive enough to cause stronger behavioural responses.

Lastly, the absence of moderating effects of employee role (creative vs. management), presents an unexpected finding, given that creative roles are often central to luxury brand distinctiveness and symbolic expression of brand identity (Dion & Arnould, 2011). A possible explanation could be that participants did not actively differentiate between creative and management roles as these differences were only subtly incorporated in the stimuli. Alternatively, it is likely that diversity itself, when visibly signalled, was already intuitively associated with creativity and innovativeness, leading to participants relying on simplified cues (e.g. diverse equals creative), rather than the role-specific information. As a result, framing the role alone might have had a limited effect on brand evaluation.

In summary, these interpretations remain speculative and highlight possible methodological and contextual limitations of the present study. They also emphasize directions for future research, which will be discussed in the following sections.

5.5 Methodological Limitations

Some of the interpretations discussed above may be related to the methodological aspects of this study and should be considered when interpreting the findings.

Firstly, the use of a fictional luxury brand, combined with brief text- and image-based stimuli, may have limited emotional engagement and perceived realism of the scenario. Without previous knowledge of the brand or additional context (e.g., brand history, reputation or product category), the participants might have struggled to develop a personal or affective connection with the luxury brand. In addition, the lack of narrative or dynamic content (e.g., real-world context, video, testimonials) may have decreased participant involvement and weakened the psychological impact of the communicated DEI message, particularly with regard to purchase intention.

Secondly, the single exposure in a between-subjects design does not fully represent how consumers usually encounter luxury brand communication in real life. In practice, signals related to DEI are often repeatedly shared across multiple channels (e.g., social media, advertising campaigns), allowing meanings to evolve over time. This limitation reduces the ecological validity of the experiment and may partly explain the absence of more robust or sustained effects.

Thirdly, the final sample size (N=176) was sufficient for detecting moderate main effects but may not have been large enough to capture more subtle interaction effects (e.g., between diversity and employee role). Moreover, the sample was relatively similar in terms of age, gender and education level, which may not reflect perspectives of broader consumer groups and therefore limit the generalizability of the findings.

Finally, the use of self-reported measures (i.e., Likert-scale items such as *I intend to buy this brand's product*) introduces common limitations related to socially sensitive topics. In the context of DEI-related communication such as inclusive hiring and representation, participants may have answered in ways that seem acceptable instead of sharing true feelings or intentions. As a result, expressed evaluations may capture aspirational or socially desirable responses rather than actual behavioural intentions in real purchasing situations.

While these considerations do not undermine the main findings, they underline important boundaries for interpretation and point to different directions for future research.

5.6 Directions for Future Research

The findings of this study point to several important directions for future research. First, future studies could examine if the behavioural relevance of DEI communication increases when it is part of narratives that are deeper, more emotionally appealing and brand-consistent narratives (e.g., multi-channel campaigns featuring diverse team members). Given the perception-behaviour gap observed in this study, this pattern indicates that isolated or abstract DEI signals may stay at a superficial, perception-based level of evaluation. As emotionally embedded DEI communication remains underexplored within luxury brands, future research could investigate whether it enhances personal connection, increases the persuasive power of DEI-related messaging and ultimately helps translate DEI related perceptions into behavioural outcomes.

In addition to narrative depth, future research could explore cognitive mechanisms through which consumers process DEI-related brand signals. The lack of moderation effects of employee role leaves open whether consumers used role-specific information when forming their opinions: Did they focus on specific aspects of the roles, such as job titles or role descriptions, or did they take cognitive shortcuts, e.g. by associating visible diversity with being progressive or innovative? Is the diversity signal alone the dominant driver of consumer responses? Future studies could incorporate process measures, (e.g., role-title recall, perceived relevance of the role framing, attention checks) to clarify when role framing becomes psychologically significant and whether it adds strategic value for luxury brands when navigating DEI communication – in a way that avoids superficial inclusion.

Building on this point, future research could adopt a more nuanced examination of role typologies by moving beyond creative and managerial roles and considering *frontstage* versus *backstage* organizational roles. While the findings suggest that the visibility and symbolic relevance of DEI representation may matter more than functional distinctions, future studies could explore if the perceived influence of DEI signals varies depending on the role's conspicuousness within the luxury brand. Consumers are typically exposed to forms of diversity in frontstage roles (e.g., designers or customer-facing roles), while backstage diversity (e.g., HR or finance,) is rarely directly observable. This raises the question of whether the impact DEI signals depend on whether – and how – luxury brands communicate internal inclusion efforts. Future research could therefore test if role visibility changes how communicated DEI hiring information is interpreted, particularly within the luxury industry.

Furthermore, future studies could increase ecological validity by investigating DEI communication within real, recognizable luxury brands rather than relying on fictional brand scenarios. Pre-existing brand associations (e.g., heritage, prestige, consumer trust) could shape the interpretation of diversity signals and affect whether perceptual effects lead to behavioural outcomes. Researchers could test if consumers react differently to DEI messaging from a well-known luxury brand versus an unknown or fictional brand. It could also be looked into whether these impacts change across different luxury sectors – such as fashion, hospitality or automotive, as they may differ in strategic priorities, consumer expectations and brand approaches.

Lastly, future research could explore possible boundary conditions related to the dimensions of diversity or inclusion that are communicated, as well as the intersection of multiple identities. Different forms of representation, such as LGBTQ+ identities, disability or ethnicity, can create unique associations, stereotypes or perceptions of compatibility with luxury brands when communicated in hiring contexts. Examining how consumers process different types of underrepresentation could provide a more detailed understanding of when DEI cues function as distinctive brand signals versus when they are perceived as normalized baseline expectations.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Study Overview

The aim of this study was to investigate how communicating diversity in hiring practices – particularly the hiring of a transgender employee – influences brand perceptions and purchase intentions of luxury brands. A 2×2 between-subjects experimental design was employed to determine whether diverse hiring communication (vs. non-diverse) and employee role (creative vs. management) influenced important brand-related outcomes: brand innovativeness, brand attitude, purchase intention and employee evaluation.

The findings partially support the first hypothesis: communicating diversity in hiring resulted in significantly higher perceptions of brand innovativeness – indicating that brief text-based messages can shape how luxury brands are perceived in terms of being modern and progressive. However, no significant effects were observed on purchase intention or on the evaluation of the individual employee – suggesting that signals of inclusive hiring alone do not lead to changes in behaviour.

The second hypothesis was not supported, as no interaction effects were found between the diversity type and employee role. The distinction between a creative or managerial position did not significantly affect how participants evaluated the brand or the individual employee. This implies that visible communication of diversity may function independently in shaping brand perceptions, regardless of internal role differences. While descriptive trends showed slightly more favorable perceptions in the diverse + creative scenario, particularly for brand innovativeness, these differences were not statistically significant and should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Overall, the findings highlight both the potential and the limits of hiring-related DEI communication within luxury brand contexts.

6.2 Key Contributions

This research contributes to literature on DEI in luxury branding by showing that even minimal hiring-related DEI communication can shape brand perceptions in a meaningful way. Building on the significant positive effects on brand innovativeness, the study suggests that DEI cues can function as symbolic brand signals, conveying modernity, progressiveness and a forward-looking brand orientation - even within an industry mainly associated with heritage, exclusivity and continuity.

From a theoretical perspective, the visibility of diversity (i.e., stating the employment of a transgender individual), can increasingly be viewed as a norm rather than exception, suggesting that such visibility can be integrated into luxury branding without necessarily undermining it.

From a practical viewpoint, hiring-related DEI communication can strengthen certain perceptual outcomes (e.g., innovativeness), but the lack of significant effects on purchasing intentions suggests that the mere communication of diversity is unlikely to shift consumer behaviour when presented in isolation, pointing to the limitations of superficial DEI communication.

Accordingly, DEI communication may be more effective when it fits the luxury brand's broader strategy and is consistent with internal practices, emphasizing the importance for luxury brands of embedding such messaging in credible leadership principles, transparent recruitment practices and a coherent brand narrative rather than presenting it as a standalone message.

No meaningful role-based effects were found, as diversity cues did not result in different evaluations under role framing (creative vs. management). Instead, consumers might rely on simplified heuristic processing when interpreting DEI signals, focusing more on the visible presence of diversity than on nuanced role distinctions. The mere visibility of diversity cues might function as a dominant factor in shaping consumer evaluations, challenging the assumption that DEI cues would have a stronger impact when linked to creative roles, given their central function in luxury brands (e.g. driving innovation and shaping symbolic brand expressions).

6.3 Conclusion and Outlook

This study aligns with the ongoing shift in societal expectations, in which diversity and inclusion are increasingly viewed as normal and expected by consumers. Within luxury brands, communicating inclusive hiring practices is becoming more acceptable and may be seen as part of contemporary brand communication rather than a disruptive signal. DEI signals can enhance certain brand perceptions, however, their effectiveness in shaping consumer behaviour depends on meaningful and genuine integration into broader brand strategies and organizational practices.

Future research could build on these insights by exploring how consumers cognitively process DEI signals and if emotionally engaging storytelling formats help translate perceptual effects into behavioural outcomes. In addition, it could be examined if consumer response varies across forms of diversity, role typologies and sector-specific norms, and whether perceived authenticity shapes how inclusive hiring communication is interpreted.

As DEI becomes an expected standard, luxury brands could move beyond symbolic gestures and ensure visible, authentic and meaningful integration of DEI. Achieving this can help improve brand perceptions beyond innovativeness and while not necessarily affecting purchase intentions in the short term, may contribute to shaping consumer behaviour over time and fostering genuine relationships with a growing audience that values diversity and social awareness.

References

Aaker, J. L. (1997). Dimensions of Brand Personality. *Journal Of Marketing Research*, *34*(3), 347–356. https://doi.org/10.1177/002224379703400304

Adamson, T. (2024, 2. Oktober). *Chanel show wrestles with designer void as actor Lupita Nyong'o talks diversity in fashion | AP News*. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/chanel-paris-fashion-week-lupita-295f0d27ab9e2cfca5c3b1cb28eb5739

Adegeest, D. (2023, 9. Oktober). Kering called out for lack of diversity in top design jobs. *FashionUnited*. https://fashionunited.uk/news/people/kering-called-out-for-lack-of-diversity-in-top-design-jobs/2023100972010

Aguinis, H. & Bradley, K. J. (2014). Best Practice Recommendations for Designing and Implementing Experimental Vignette Methodology Studies. *Organizational Research Methods*, 17(4), 351–371. https://doi.org/10.1177/1094428114547952

Ajzen, I. (1991). The theory of planned behavior. *Organizational Behavior And Human Decision Processes*, *50*(2), 179–211. https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90020-t

Amatulli, C. & Guido, G. (2011). Determinants of purchasing intention for fashion luxury goods in the Italian market. *Journal Of Fashion Marketing And Management*, *15*(1), 123–136. https://doi.org/10.1108/13612021111112386

Ambrosino, B. (2014, 30. Oktober). Apple's Tim Cook on how being gay made him a better CEO. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/2014/10/30/7130953/apple-tim-cook-gay-essay

Arsel, Z., Crockett, D. & Scott, M. L. (2021). Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the Journal of Consumer Research: A Curation and Research Agenda. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, *48*(5), 920–933. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab057

Bagozzi, R. P., Belanche, D., Casaló, L. V. & Flavián, C. (2016). The Role of Anticipated Emotions in Purchase Intentions. *Psychology And Marketing*, *33*(8), 629–645. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20905

Bain & Company. (2014). *Bain & Company Luxury Consumer Study*. https://www.bain.com/migration/press-releases/2014/lens-on-the-worldwide-luxury-consumer/

Barak, M. E. M. (2015). Inclusion is the Key to Diversity Management, but WhatisInclusion? *Human Services Organizations Management Leadership & Governance*, *39*(2), 83–88. https://doi.org/10.1080/23303131.2015.1035599

Barwick, T., Brown, P., Burns, T., Harris, T., Lucas, C., Zizaoui, I. & McKinsey's Retail Practice. (2022a). *The rise of the inclusive consumer*. https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/the-rise-of-the-inclusive-consumer#/

Berg, A., Amed, I., Hedrich, S., Rölkens, F., Balchandani, A., Young, R. & Poojara, S. (2020). *The State of Fashion 2020*. https://www.mckinsey.com/~/media/mckinsey/industries/retail/our%20insights/the%20state%20of%20fashion%202020%20navigating%20uncertainty/the-state-of-fashion-2020-final.pdf

Bernstein, R. S., Bulger, M., Salipante, P. & Weisinger, J. Y. (2019). From Diversity to Inclusion to Equity: A Theory of Generative Interactions. *Journal Of Business Ethics*, *167*(3), 395–410. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1

Beverland, M. B., Lindgreen, A. & Vink, M. W. (2008). Projecting Authenticity Through Advertising: Consumer Judgments of Advertisers' Claims. *Journal Of Advertising*, 37(1), 5–15. https://doi.org/10.2753/joa0091-3367370101

Bian, Q. & Forsythe, S. (2011). Purchase intention for luxury brands: A cross cultural comparison. *Journal Of Business Research*, *65*(10), 1443–1451. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.010

Blomberg. (2023). *Bloomberg Gender-Equality Index 2023*. Bloomberg. https://www.bloomberg.com/company/press/bloomberg-2023-gei/

Bouncken, R., Brem, A. & Kraus, S. (2015). MULTI-CULTURAL TEAMS AS SOURCES FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY ON TEAM PERFORMANCE. *International Journal Of Innovation Management*, *20*(01), 1650012. https://doi.org/10.1142/s1363919616500122

Bulgari. (o. D.). *Inclusion, diversity, equity*. Bvlgari. https://www.bulgari.com/en-int/sustainability/governance/inclusivity-diversity-equity.html?srsltid=AfmBOoq9ojR32So0l87rUp7KJ1co1eMvWDpcEHe0M9zMMc_cG0uW932

Butler-Young, S. & Williams, R. (2024, 2. Juli). Luxury fashion's designer diversity problem persists. *The Business Of Fashion*.

https://www.businessoffashion.com/briefings/workplace-talent/luxury-fashions-designer-diversity-problem-persists/

Carmeli, A., Reiter-Palmon, R. & Ziv, E. (2010). Inclusive Leadership and Employee Involvement in Creative Tasks in the Workplace: The Mediating Role of Psychological Safety. *Creativity Research Journal*, *22*(3), 250–260. https://doi.org/10.1080/10400419.2010.504654

Carrington, M. J., Neville, B. A. & Whitwell, G. J. (2010). Why Ethical Consumers Don't Walk Their Talk: Towards a Framework for Understanding the Gap Between the Ethical Purchase Intentions and Actual Buying Behaviour of Ethically Minded Consumers. *Journal Of Business Ethics*, *97*(1), 139–158. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0501-6

Chrobot-Mason, D. & Aramovich, N. P. (2013). The Psychological Benefits of Creating an Affirming Climate for Workplace Diversity. *Group & Organization Management*, *38*(6), 659–689. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601113509835

Clarke, T. (2023, 28. November). *Council Post: Three reasons The case for corporate DEI programs is stronger than ever*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2023/11/28/three-reasons-the-case-for-corporate-dei-programs-is-stronger-than-ever/

Cohen, J. B., Fishbein, M. & Ahtola, O. T. (1972). The Nature and Uses of Expectancy-Value Models in Consumer Attitude Research. *Journal Of Marketing Research*, *9*(4), 456. https://doi.org/10.2307/3149317

Crenshaw, K. (1991). Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color. *Stanford Law Review*, 43(6), 1241. https://doi.org/10.2307/1229039

Danziger, P. N. (2019, 3. März). *Luxury brands need more than diversity to prevent more culturally insensitive mistakes*. Forbes. https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2019/03/03/dolce-and-gabbana-gucci-burberry-caught-being-culturally-insensitive-diversity-isnt-the-fix

Danziger, P. N. (2024, 17. Dezember*)*. How Jaguar is abandoning the language of luxury in its rebrand. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/pamdanziger/2024/12/05/jaguar-abandoned-the-language-of-luxury-in-its-rebrand/

Debenedetti, A., Philippe, D. & Dion, D. (2024). Balancing exclusivity and inclusivity through the strategic domestication of the luxury retail experience. *International Journal Of Research in Marketing*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2024.05.001

Dion, D. & Arnould, E. (2011). Retail Luxury Strategy: Assembling Charisma through Art and Magic. *Journal Of Retailing*, *87*(4), 502–520. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jretai.2011.09.001

Disability:IN, Accenture, Kramer, J. & Houghton, J. (2023). The disability inclusion imperative. In *The Disability Inclusion Imperative*. https://www.accenture.com/content/dam/accenture/final/accenture-com/document2/Disability-Inclusion-Report-Business-Imperative.pdf

Dixon-Fyle, S., Dolan, K., Hunt, D. V. & Prince, S. (2020, 19. Mai). *Diversity wins: How inclusion matters*. McKinsey & Company. https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters

Doyle, M. (2024, 1. Mai). *2019's Biggest PR Blunders: Have Luxury Brands Learnt their Lessons?* Luxury Society. https://luxurysociety.com/en/2019s-biggest-pr-blunders-have-luxury-brands-learnt-their-lessons/

Eagly, A. H. & Karau, S. J. (2002). Role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders. Psychological Review, 109(3), 573–598. https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295x.109.3.573

Eagly, A. H., Carli, L. L. & Harvard Business School Press. (2008). *Women and the Labyrinth of Leadership*. http://harvardbusinessonline.hbsp.harvard.edu/hbsp/hbr/articles/article.jsp?articleID=R0709C&ml_action=get-article&print=true&ml_issueid=null

Ferraro, C., Hemsley, A. & Sands, S. (2022). Embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI): Considerations and opportunities for brand managers. *Business Horizons*, *66*(4), 463–479. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2022.09.005

Ferdman, B. M. & Deane, R. B. (2013). Diversity at Work: The Practice of Inclusion. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118764282

Field, A. P. (2017). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*, 5th edition. In *Figshare*.

Francombe, A. (2023, 6. Oktober). Why are so many creative directors white men? *Vogue*. https://www.vogue.com/article/why-are-so-many-creative-directors-white-men

Fritz, K., Schoenmueller, V. & Bruhn, M. (2017). Authenticity in branding – exploring antecedents and consequences of brand authenticity. *European Journal Of Marketing*, *51*(2), 324–348. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-10-2014-0633

FTSE Russel. (2025, 20. Mai). *FTSE Diversity and Inclusion Index*. LSEG. https://www.lseg.com/en/ftse-russell/indices/diversity-and-inclusion-index

Fuentes, H., Vera-Martinez, J. & Kolbe, D. (2022). The role of intangible attributes of luxury brands for signalling status: A systematic literature review. *International Journal Of Consumer Studies*, *47*(6), 2747–2766. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12852

Gabbatt, A. (2024, 10. Dezember). Republican talk of Jaguar's 'wokeness' is overblown, but it has a long road ahead. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2024/dec/10/republicans-jaguar-woke-rebrand

Gotsis, G. & Kortezi, Z. (2014a). Critical studies in Diversity Management Literature. In *SpringerBriefs in psychology*. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-017-9475-6

Gucci. (2024). *Equilibrium Impact Report 2024*. https://www.gucci.com/int/en/nst/equilibrium?srsltid=AfmBOopJC0vpfV8aBq1ZMQ7_RsYa7Y1JtE2Uvm76x239ZfECaCfpRpaD

Guillaume, Y. R., Dawson, J. F., Otaye-Ebede, L., Woods, S. A. & West, M. A. (2015). Harnessing demographic differences in organizations: What moderates the effects of workplace diversity? *Journal Of Organizational Behavior*, *38*(2), 276–303. https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2040

Hale, K. (2021, 7. Juni). Prada leans on Diversity Council for representation following Blackface crisis. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/korihale/2021/06/07/prada-leans-on-diversity-council-for-representation-following-blackface-crisis/

Hall, W. J. (2019). Sexual orientation. *Encyclopedia Of Social Work*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199975839.013.1271

Han, Y. J., Nunes, J. C. & Drèze, X. (2010). Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence. *Journal Of Marketing*, *74*(4), 15–30. https://doi.org/10.1509/jmkg.74.4.15

Henning, V., Hennig-Thurau, T. & Feiereisen, S. (2012). Giving the Expectancy-Value Model a Heart. *Psychology And Marketing*, *29*(10), 765–781. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20562

Hewlett, S. A., Marshall, M. & Sherbin, L. (2013, 1. Dezember). *How diversity can drive innovation*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2013/12/how-diversity-can-drive-innovation

Hien, N. V. T., Thong, V. H. & Yen, T. H. (2024). Applying the Extended Theory of Planned Behavior Model in Studying Luxury Fashion Products' Purchase Intention of Vietnamese Consumers. *Revista De Gestão Social E Ambiental*, *18*(6), e05471. https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n6-095

Kapferer, J. & Bastien, V. (2012). The luxury strategy: Break the Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands. Kogan Page Limited.

Kapferer, J. & Valette-Florence, P. (2016). Beyond rarity: the paths of luxury desire. How luxury brands grow yet remain desirable. Journal Of Product & Brand Management, 25(2), 120–133. https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-09-2015-0988

Kering. (o. D.). *Sustainability Progress Report 2020-2023*. Kering. https://www.kering.com/en/sustainability/crafting-tomorrow-s-luxury/2017-2025-roadmap/2020-2023-progress-reportKhan, U. & Kalra, A. (2021). It's Good to Be Different: How Diversity Impacts Judgments of Moral Behavior. *Journal Of Consumer Research*, *49*(2), 177–201. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcr/ucab061

Ko, E., Costello, J. P. & Taylor, C. R. (2017). What is a luxury brand? A new definition and review of the literature. *Journal Of Business Research*, *99*, 405–413. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2017.08.023

Kochan, T., Bezrukova, K., Ely, R., Jackson, S., Joshi, A., Jehn, K., Leonard, J., Levine, D. & Thomas, D. (2003). The effects of diversity on business performance: Report of the diversity research network. *Human Resource Management*, *42*(1), 3–21. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.10061

Krzeminska, A., Austin, R. D., Bruyère, S. M. & Hedley, D. (2019). The advantages and challenges of neurodiversity employment in organizations. *Journal Of Management & Organization*, *25*(04), 453–463. https://doi.org/10.1017/jmo.2019.58

Lee, Z., Alwi, S. F. S. & Gambetti, R. (2024). The thousand faces of beauty: How credible storytelling unlocks disability representation in inclusive luxury fashion branding. *Journal Of Business Research*, *181*, 114744. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2024.114744

Lorenzo, R., Voigt, N., Tsusaka, M., Krentz, M. & Abouzahr, K. (o. D.). HOW DIVERSE LEADERSHIP TEAMS BOOST INNOVATION. In *The Boston Consulting*

Group. http://boston-consulting-group-brightspot.s3.amazonaws.com/img-src/BCG-How-Diverse-Leadership-Teams-Boost-Innovation-Jan-2018_tcm9-207935.pdf

McGowan, M., Shiu, E. & Hassan, L. M. (2016). The influence of social identity on value perceptions and intention. *Journal Of Consumer Behaviour*, *16*(3), 242–253. https://doi.org/10.1002/cb.1627

Morhart, F., Malär, L., Guèvremont, A., Girardin, F. & Grohmann, B. (2014). Brand authenticity: An integrative framework and measurement scale. *Journal Of Consumer Psychology*, *25*(2), 200–218. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcps.2014.11.006

Napoli, J., Dickinson, S. J., Beverland, M. B. & Farrelly, F. (2013). Measuring consumer-based brand authenticity. *Journal Of Business Research*, *67*(6), 1090–1098. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.06.001

Nkomo, S. M., Bell, M. P., Roberts, L. M., Joshi, A. & Thatcher, S. M. B. (2019). Diversity at a Critical Juncture: New Theories for a Complex Phenomenon. *Academy Of Management Review*, *44*(3), 498–517. https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2019.0103

Pérez, D. C., Masson, P. L., Weil, B., Araud, A. & Chaperon, V. (2020). Creative heritage: Overcoming tensions between innovation and tradition in the luxury industry. *Creativity And Innovation Management*, 29(S1), 140–151. https://doi.org/10.1111/caim.12378

Pfeifer, S. (2024, 19. November). Rolls-Royce hardwires inclusion into its systems. *Financial Times*. https://www.ft.com/content/4bb7911a-d238-4e10-adae-7e8f701a7997

Phelps, N. (2018, 26. März). Virgil Abloh is Louis Vuitton’s New Men’s artistic director. *Vogue*. https://www.vogue.com/article/louis-vuitton-names-virgil-abloh-mens-artistic-director

Radon, A. (2012). Luxury Brand Exclusivity Strategies – An Illustration of a Cultural Collaboration. *Journal Of Business Administration Research*, *1*(1). https://doi.org/10.5430/jbar.v1n1p106

Raimondo, M. A., Cardamone, E., Miceli, G. “. & Bagozzi, R. P. (2022). Consumers’ identity signaling towards social groups: The effects of dissociative desire on brand prominence preferences. *Psychology And Marketing*, *39*(10), 1964–1978. https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.21711

Raj, M. P. M., A, V. & S, A. (2018). Measurement of Customers' Brand Choice and Brand Loyalty Expectancy Value & Colombo – Morrison Model Approach. *Journal Of International Business Research And Marketing*, *4*(1), 24–29. https://doi.org/10.18775/jibrm.1849-8558.2015.41.3003

Ravazzani, S., Mazzei, A., Fisichella, C. & Butera, A. (2025). Making DEI communication work inside and out: A study of experiences and challenges among Italian companies. *Journal Of Marketing Communications*, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527266.2025.2459644

Roberson, Q. M. (2006). Disentangling the Meanings of Diversity and Inclusion in Organizations. *Group & Organization Management*, *31*(2), 212–236. https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601104273064

Roca, D., Suárez, A. & Meléndez-Rodríguez, S. (2023). Female creative managers as drivers for gender diversity in advertising creative departments: a critical mass approach. *Gender in Management An International Journal*, *39*(4), 465–479. https://doi.org/10.1108/gm-09-2022-0291

Rocco, B. (2025, 19. November). Brand value of the leading 10 Most Valuable luxury Brands worldwide in 2025. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/267948/brand-value-of-the-leading-10-most-valuable-luxury-brands-worldwide/

Romaniuk, J. & Huang, A. (2019). Understanding consumer perceptions of luxury brands. *International Journal Of Market Research*, *62*(5), 546–560. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470785319891109

Rozenkowska, K. (2023). Theory of planned behavior in consumer behavior research: A systematic literature review. *International Journal Of Consumer Studies*, *47*(6), 2670–2700. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijcs.12970

Rubin, R. (2019, 2. Oktober). Variety. *Variety*. https://variety.com/2019/film/news/walt-disney-animation-directors-1203355109/

Rushe, D. (2013). Mary Barra named GM CEO to become America's first female car chief. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/dec/10/gm-mary-barra-ceo-first-woman-car

Salem, N. S. F. & Salem, N. S. O. (2018). SELF-IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY AS DRIVERS OF CONSUMERS' PURCHASE INTENTION TOWARDS LUXURY FASHION GOODS AND WILLINGNESS TO PAY PREMIUM

PRICE. *Asian Academy Of Management Journal*, *23*(2), 161–184. https://doi.org/10.21315/aamj2018.23.2.8

Schmitz, S., Rosa, M. H., Patient, D. L., Vauclair, C. & Mariano, J. (2025). Workplace youngism: a scoping review of agism toward younger workers. *Work Aging And Retirement*. https://doi.org/10.1093/workar/waaf004

Seo, Y. & Buchanan-Oliver, M. (2015). Luxury branding: the industry, trends, and future conceptualisations. *Asia Pacific Journal Of Marketing And Logistics*, *27*(1), 82–98. https://doi.org/10.1108/apjml-10-2014-0148

Šerić, M. & Mikulić, J. (2020). Building brand equity through communication consistency in luxury hotels: an impact-asymmetry analysis. *Journal Of Hospitality And Tourism Insights*, 3(4), 451–468. https://doi.org/10.1108/jhti-11-2019-0119

Shams, R., Alpert, F. & Brown, M. (2015). Consumer perceived brand innovativeness. *European Journal Of Marketing*, *49*(9/10), 1589–1615. https://doi.org/10.1108/ejm-05-2013-0240

Shoaib, M. (2024, 18. Januar). Fixing retail's leadership diversity problem. *Vogue Business*. https://www.voguebusiness.com/story/companies/fixing-retails-leadership-diversity-problem

Shore, L. M., Chung-Herrera, B. G., Dean, M. A., Ehrhart, K. H., Jung, D. I., Randel, A. E. & Singh, G. (2008). Diversity in organizations: Where are we now and where are we going? *Human Resource Management Review*, *19*(2), 117–133. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2008.10.004

Shore, L. M., Cleveland, J. N. & Sanchez, D. (2017). Inclusive workplaces: A review and model. *Human Resource Management Review*, *28*(2), 176–189. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2017.07.003

Simonelli, C., Galizia, R. & Eleuteri, S. (2022). Sexuality and Sexual Orientation in the Twenty-First Century. In *Springer eBooks* (S. 13–23). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-11701-5_2

Spears, N. & Singh, S. N. (2004). Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions. *Journal Of Current Issues & Research in Advertising*, *26*(2), 53–66. https://doi.org/10.1080/10641734.2004.10505164

Sudbury-Riley, L. & Kohlbacher, F. (2015). Ethically minded consumer behavior: Scale review, development, and validation. *Journal Of Business Research*, *69*(8), 2697–2710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2015.11.005

Syed, J. & Ozbilgin, M. (2015). *Managing Diversity and Inclusion: An International Perspective*. SAGE Publications Limited.

Truong, Y., McColl, R. & Kitchen, P. J. (2009). *New luxury brand positioning and the emergence of Masstige brands.* Journal Of Brand Managemen*t*, 16(5–6), 375–382. https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.2009.1

Turunen, L. L. M. & Leipämaa-Leskinen, H. (2015). *Pre-loved luxury: identifying the meanings of second-hand luxury possessions.* Journal Of Product & Brand Management, 24(1), 57–65. https://doi.org/10.1108/jpbm-05-2014-0603

Unilever. (2023, 7. September). Beyond Skin-deep: creating inclusive products through inclusive R&D. *Unilever*. https://www.unilever.com/news/news-search/2023/beyond-skindeep-creating-inclusive-products-through-inclusive-rd/

Van Knippenberg, D., Nishii, L. H. & Dwertmann, D. J. G. (2020). Synergy from diversity: Managing team diversity to enhance performance. *Behavioral Science & Policy*, *6*(1), 75–92. https://doi.org/10.1353/bsp.2020.0007

Vänskä, A. & Gurova, O. (2021). The fashion scandal: Social media, identity and the globalization of fashion in the twenty-first century. *International Journal Of Fashion Studies*, *9*(1), 5–27. https://doi.org/10.1386/infs_00045_1

Voir Editorial Team. (2020, 23. Dezember). *Ellie Goldstein Stars in Gucci Beauty Campaign as First Down Syndrome Model - Voir Fashion*. Voir Fashion. https://www.voirfashion.co.uk/post/ellie-goldstein-stars-in-gucci-campaign/

Vredenburg, J., Kapitan, S., Spry, A. & Kemper, J. A. (2020). Brands Taking a Stand: Authentic Brand Activism or Woke Washing? *Journal Of Public Policy & Marketing*, 39(4), 444–460. https://doi.org/10.1177/0743915620947359

Zamindar, S. (2023, 19. Januar). Inside Louis Vuitton's viral collaboration with Yayoi Kusama. *Vogue India*. https://www.vogue.in/fashion/content/inside-louis-vuittons-viral-collaboration-with-yayoi-kusama

Appendix

Appendix A: Stimulus Material

A1: Diverse Employee × Creative Role:

inclusion+creative

Nayara, a Paris-based luxury brand, is known for its high quality and timeless design. This season, the brand hired Elena, an experienced **transgender designer (she/her)**, for the position of **creative director** on their **design team**. Elena brings an inclusive perspective, has relevant expertise in the field, and will lead the creative direction of the upcoming collection.

A2: Diverse Employee × Management Role:

inclusion+manager

Nayara, a Paris-based luxury brand, is known for its high quality and timeless design. This season, the brand hired Elena, an experienced **transgender manager (she/her)**, for the position of **executive** on their **management team**. Elena brings an inclusive perspective, has relevant expertise in the field, and will oversee the strategic planning of the upcoming collection.

A3: Non-diverse Employee × Creative Role:

control+creative

Nayara, a Paris-based luxury brand, is known for its high quality and timeless design. This season, the brand hired Elena, an experienced **designer (she/her)**, for the position of **creative director** on their **design team**. Elena has relevant expertise in the field and will lead the creative direction of the upcoming collection.

A4: Non-diverse Employee × Management Role

control+manager

Nayara, a Paris-based luxury brand, is known for its high quality and timeless design. This season, the brand hired Elena, an experienced **manager (she/her)**, for the position of **executive** on their **management team**. Elena has relevant expertise in the field and will oversee the strategic planning of the upcoming collection.

Appendix B: Survey Instrument (Questionnaire Items)

Brand Attitude (Spears & Singh, 2004)
Instruction: *What is your overall attitude toward the brand?*
Items (bipolar semantic differential, 7-point scale**):**

- *Bad (1) - Good (7)*
- *Dislike (1) - Like (7)*

Purchase Intention (Spears & Singh, 2004; Bagozzi et al., 2016)
Instruction: *Please rate the following statements about the brand.*
Items (7-point Likert scale):

- *I intend to buy this brand's product.*
- *I am likely to buy this brand's product.*

Brand Innovativeness (Shams et al., 2015)
Instruction: *How much do you agree with the following statements?*
Items (7-point Likert scale):

- *This brand is innovative.*
- *This brand regularly introduces new and different ideas.*
- *This brand demonstrates innovation in its operations.*

Scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree

Employee Evaluation (Exploratory)
Instruction: *Please evaluate the employee presented in the scenario.*
Items (7-point Likert scale):

- *Competent*
- *Creative*
- *Reliable*
- *Innovative*

Scale: 1= very low, 7 = very high

Manipulation Check
Instruction: *You have just been exposed to a brand scenario. Please select the option that best describes what you read.*
Items (single choice):

- *I read about a luxury brand that hired a* ***diverse*** *team member for a* ***creative*** *role.*
- *I read about a luxury brand that hired a* ***diverse*** *team member for a* ***management*** *role.*
- *I read about a luxury brand that hired a* ***non-diverse*** *team member for a* ***creative*** *role.*
- *I read about a luxury brand that hired a* ***non-diverse*** *team member for a* ***management*** *role.*
- *I'm not sure / I don't remember.*

Luxury Interest (attitudinal)
Instruction: *How interested are you in luxury brands?*
Item (7-point Likert scale): 1 = not at all interested, 7 = very much interested

Gender
Instruction: *What is your gender?*
Response options:
- *Male*
- *Female*
- *Other (Prefer not to say)*

Education
Instruction: *What is the highest level of education you have completed or the highest degree you have received?*
Response options:
- *High school or equivalent (e.g., Abitur, Matura)*
- *Bachelor's degree*
- *Master's degree*
- *Doctoral or professional degree (e.g., PhD, MD, JD)*
- *Other (open text)*

Employee Status
Instruction: *Which statement best describes your current employment status?*
Response options:
- *Employed (paid employee)*
- *Self-employed*
- *Unemployed (looking for work)*
- *Retired*
- *Not employed (not looking for work)*
- *Other (open text)*

Household Income
Instruction: *What is your yearly household income (before taxes)?*
Response options:
- *Less than €30,000*
- *€30,000 – €50,000*
- *€50,000 – €80,000*
- *€80,000 – €120,000*
- *More than €120,000*
- *Prefer not to answer*

Luxury Consumption Frequency (behavioral)
Instruction: *How often do you purchase luxury products (e.g., fashion, accessories, cosmetics, watches)?*
Response options:
- *Very frequently*
- *Frequently*
- *Occasionally*
- *Rarely*
- *Never*
- *I don't purchase luxury products*
- *Prefer not to answer*

Debriefing / Disclosure
Text: *In this study, you read about a fictional brand and scenario that were created solely for research purposes*

Appendix C: Scale Reliability

Construct	Items (N)	Cronbach's α
Brand Attitude	2	.94
Brand Innovativeness	3	.87
Purchase Intention	2	.93
Employee Evaluation	4	.84

All Cronbach's α values exceeded the recommended threshold of .70, indicating satisfactory to excellent internal consistency.

Appendix D: Descriptive Overview and Statistics

Appendix D reports overall descriptive statistics as well as condition-specific means, standard deviations, and sample sizes for all dependent variables.

D1: Sample Characteristics

- **Final sample:** N = 176 (M_{age} = 28.04, SD = 10.23)
- **Gender distribution**: 65.3% female, 32.9% male, 1.8% non-binary or other gender identity
- **Employment status**: 67% employed, 11% students, 7% unemployed
- **Qualification**: collected but not included in main analyses
- **Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SES)**: rated on a 7-point scale (M = 2.96, SD = 1.82)

D2: Luxury Interest and Purchase Frequency

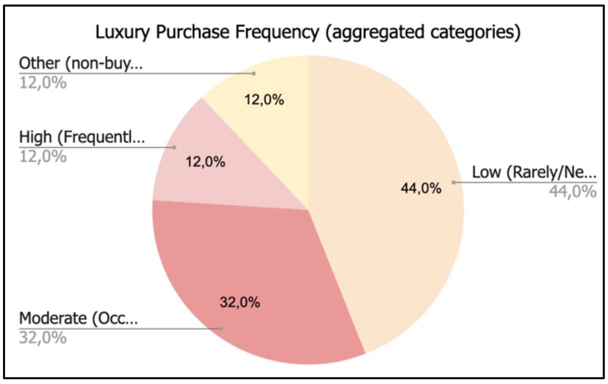


Figure D2.1 Distribution of luxury interest

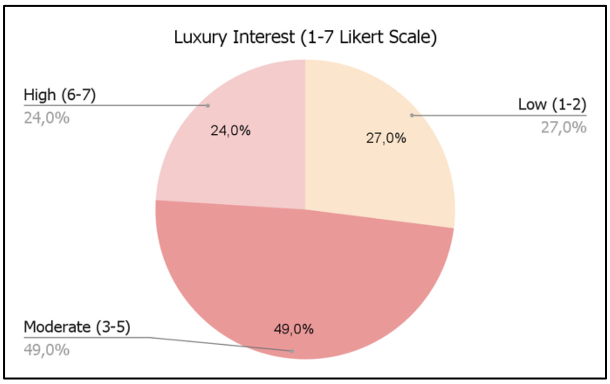


Figure D2.1 Distribution of luxury interest

D3: Experimental Group Sizes

- Diverse + Creative**: N = 44**
- Diverse + Management: **N = 80**
- Non-diverse + Creative: **N = 28**
- Non-diverse + Management: **N = 24**

D4: Manipulation Check (Descriptive Results)

- Diverse + Creative**: 86.4%**
- Diverse + Management**: 91.2%**
- Non-diverse + Creative**: 75.0%**
- Non-diverse + Management**: 79.2%**

D5: Condition-specific M & SD

Table D5.1 Brand Innovativeness

Condition	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Non-diverse + Creative	4.1733	1.0502	25
Non-diverse + Management	4.2333	0.9859	20
Diverse + Creative	5.0055	0.9879	61
Diverse + Management	4.9000	1.2310	60

Table D5.2 Brand Attitude

Condition	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Non-diverse + Creative	5.3125	1.3336	24
Non-diverse + Management	4.8684	1.2566	19
Diverse + Creative	5.5667	1.2805	60
Diverse + Management	5.5000	1.3247	54

Table D5.3 Purchase Intention

Condition	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Non-diverse + Creative	4.1800	1.5935	25
Non-diverse + Management	3.9524	1.3029	21
Diverse + Creative	4.5083	1.3607	60
Diverse + Management	4.1356	1.8402	59

Table D5.4 Employee Evaluation

Condition	**Mean**	**SD**	**N**
Non-diverse + Creative	5.4100	0.8193	25
Non-diverse + Management	5.2250	0.8657	20
Diverse + Creative	5.5574	0.9458	61
Diverse + Management	5.3500	1.0253	60

D5.5 Aggregated Means by Diversity Type (across Employee Roles)

Dependent Variable	**Diversity Type**	**Mean (M)**	**SD**
Brand Innovativeness	Non-diverse	4.20	1.28
	Diverse	4.94	1.28
Brand Attitude	Non-diverse	5.12	1.30
	Diverse	5.54	1.29
Purchase Intention	Non-diverse	4.08	1.46
	Diverse	4.34	1.61
Employee Evaluation	Non-diverse	4.88	1.18
	Diverse	5.02	1.16

Appendix E: ANOVA Results (2x2)

Appendix E presents the full SPSS output of the two-way ANOVA analyses, including Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, effect sizes (partial η²), Levene's tests, and estimated marginal means.

E1. Brand Innovativeness

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	19.913[a]	3	6.638	5.581	.001
Intercept	2747.114	1	2747.114	2309.744	<.001
diversity_type	19.178	1	19.178	16.124	<.001
employee_role	.015	1	.015	.013	.909
diversity_type * employee_role	.218	1	.218	.183	.669
Error	195.055	164	1.189		
Total	4027.667	168			
Corrected Total	214.968	167			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.093
Intercept	.934
diversity_type	.090
employee_role	.000
diversity_type * employee_role	.001
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .093 (Adjusted R Squared = .076)

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	4.918	.140	35.221	<.001	4.642
[diversity_type=,00]	-.685	.281	-2.437	.016	-1.240
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.103	.197	.526	.600	-.285
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	-.163	.382	-.428	.669	-.917
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
brand_mean_final	Based on Mean	2.813	3	164	.041
	Based on Median	2.745	3	164	.045
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.745	3	160.903	.045
	Based on trimmed mean	2.795	3	164	.042

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

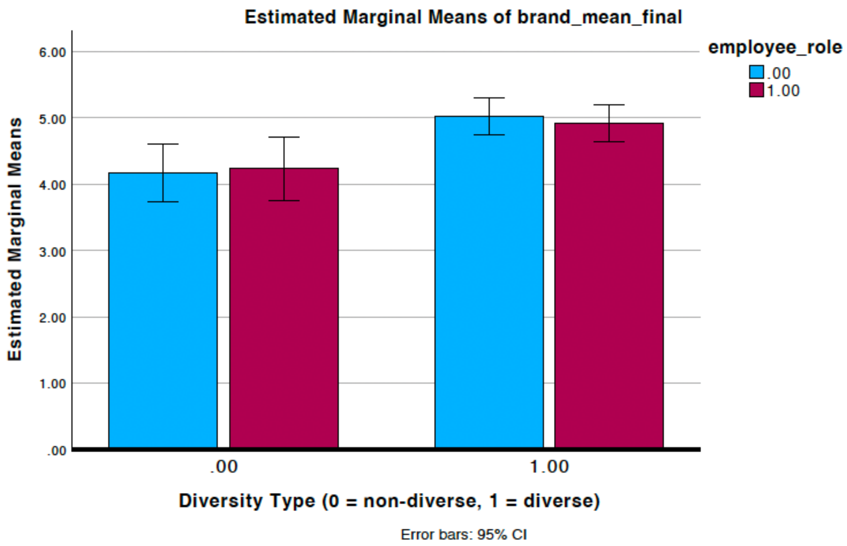
Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.194	.883
[diversity_type=,00]	-.130	.035
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.492	.002
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.590	.001
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots



E2. Brand Attitude

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	7.833[a]	3	2.611	1.547	.205
Intercept	3509.057	1	3509.057	2079.258	<.001
diversity_type	6.337	1	6.337	3.755	.054
employee_role	1.745	1	1.745	1.034	.311
diversity_type * employee_role	1.330	1	1.330	.788	.376
Error	261.586	155	1.688		
Total	4953.500	159			
Corrected Total	269.418	158			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.029
Intercept	.931
diversity_type	.024
employee_role	.007
diversity_type * employee_role	.005
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .029 (Adjusted R Squared = .010)

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	5.527	.175	31.554	<.001	5.181
[diversity_type=,00]	-.659	.346	-1.906	.059	-1.342
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.030	.242	.125	.901	-.447
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.414	.466	.888	.376	-.507
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
att_mean_final	Based on Mean	.262	3	155	.853
	Based on Median	.189	3	155	.904
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.189	3	153.194	.904
	Based on trimmed mean	.265	3	155	.850

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

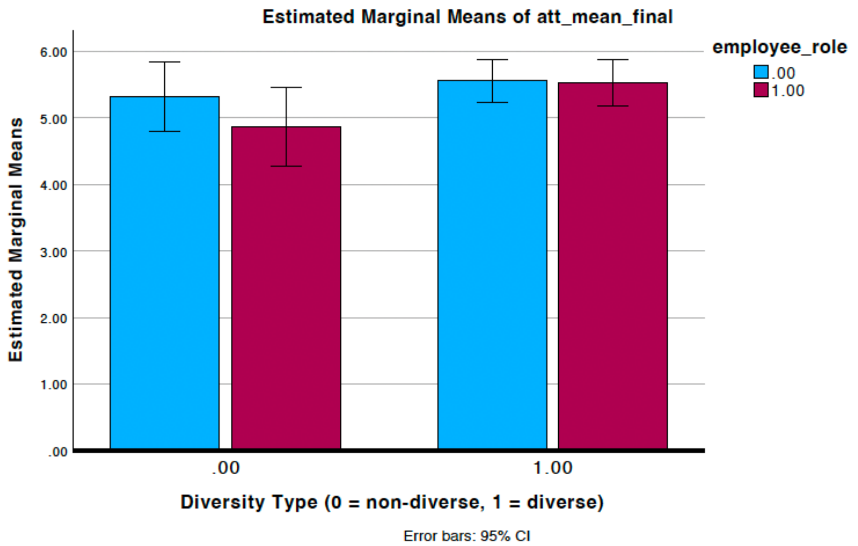
Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.873	.865
[diversity_type=,00]	.024	.023
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.507	.000
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	1.335	.005
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots



E3. Purchase Intention

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6.665[a]	3	2.222	.896	.445
Intercept	2343.065	1	2343.065	944.856	<.001
diversity_type	2.513	1	2.513	1.013	.316
employee_role	2.762	1	2.762	1.114	.293
diversity_type * employee_role	.124	1	.124	.050	.824
Error	404.209	163	2.480		
Total	3455.000	167			
Corrected Total	410.874	166			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.016
Intercept	.853
diversity_type	.006
employee_role	.007
diversity_type * employee_role	.000
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .016 (Adjusted R Squared = -.002)

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	4.167	.203	20.495	<.001	3.765
[diversity_type=,00]	-.214	.399	-.537	.592	-1.003
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.350	.286	1.221	.224	-.216
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	-.122	.547	-.223	.824	-1.202
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
pi_mean_final	Based on Mean	4.124	3	163	.008
	Based on Median	3.739	3	163	.012
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	3.739	3	156.975	.012
	Based on trimmed mean	4.109	3	163	.008

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

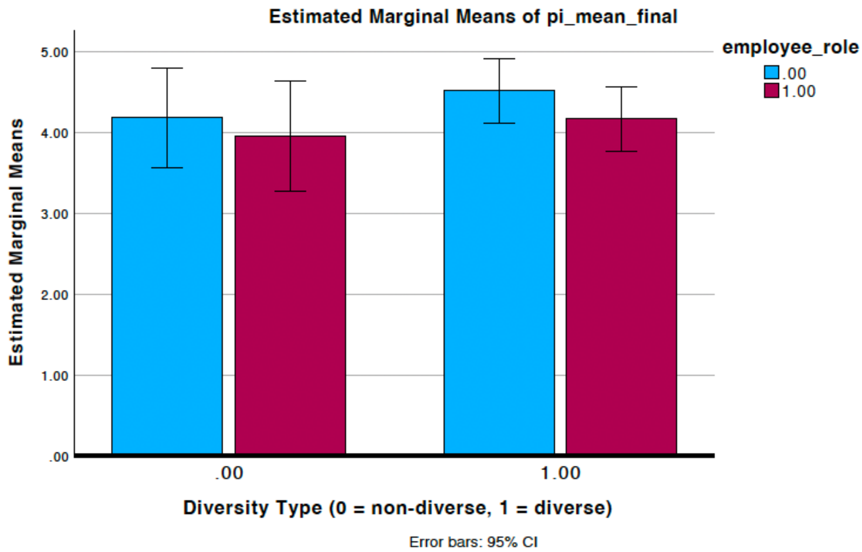
Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	4.568	.720
[diversity_type=,00]	.574	.002
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.915	.009
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.958	.000
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots



E4. Employee Evaluation

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2.334[a]	3	.778	.868	.459
Intercept	3795.344	1	3795.344	4236.156	<.001
diversity_type	.706	1	.706	.789	.376
employee_role	1.260	1	1.260	1.406	.237
diversity_type * employee_role	.004	1	.004	.005	.945
Error	146.934	164	.896		
Total	5100.125	168			
Corrected Total	149.268	167			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.016
Intercept	.963
diversity_type	.005
employee_role	.009
diversity_type * employee_role	.000
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .016 (Adjusted R Squared = -.002)

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	5.361	.121	44.233	<.001	5.121
[diversity_type=,00]	-.136	.244	-.556	.579	-.617
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.208	.171	1.218	.225	-.129
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	-.023	.331	-.069	.945	-.677
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a,b]

		Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
person_mean_final	Based on Mean	1.315	3	164	.271
	Based on Median	1.106	3	164	.349
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	1.106	3	163.095	.349
	Based on trimmed mean	1.267	3	164	.287

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Dependent variable: person_mean_final

b. Design: Intercept + diversity_type + employee_role + diversity_type * employee_role

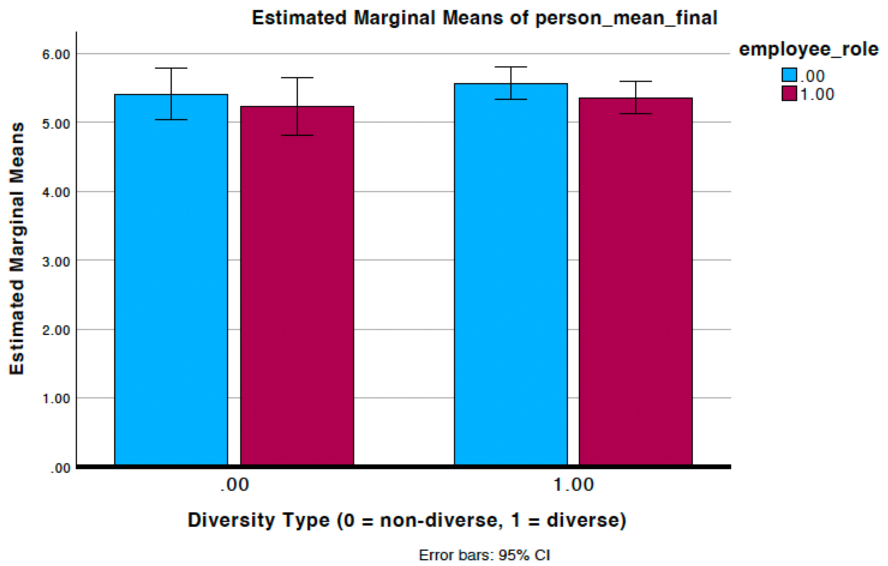
Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.600	.923
[diversity_type=,00]	.346	.002
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.545	.009
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.631	.000
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots



Appendix F: ANCOVA Results

Appendix F presents the full SPSS output of the ANCOVA analyses, including Tests of Between-Subjects Effects, effect sizes (partial η²), Levene's tests, parameter estimates, and normality diagnostics (Robustness Checks).

F1. Brand Innovativeness

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	25.857[a]	8	3.232	2.728	.008
Intercept	40.272	1	40.272	33.990	<.001
luxury	2.889	1	2.889	2.438	.120
age	.376	1	.376	.318	.574
gender	.600	1	.600	.507	.478
SES	.199	1	.199	.168	.682
Q18	.028	1	.028	.023	.879
diversity_type	16.655	1	16.655	14.057	<.001
employee_role	.023	1	.023	.019	.890
diversity_type * employee_role	.049	1	.049	.042	.838
Error	186.018	157	1.185		
Total	3955.667	166			
Corrected Total	211.875	165			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.122
Intercept	.178
luxury	.015
age	.002
gender	.003
SES	.001
Q18	.000
diversity_type	.082
employee_role	.000
diversity_type * employee_role	.000
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .122 (Adjusted R Squared = .077)

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

F	df1	df2	Sig.
2.051	3	162	.109

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + luxury + age + gender + SES + Q18 + diversity_type + employee_role + diversity_type * employee_role

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

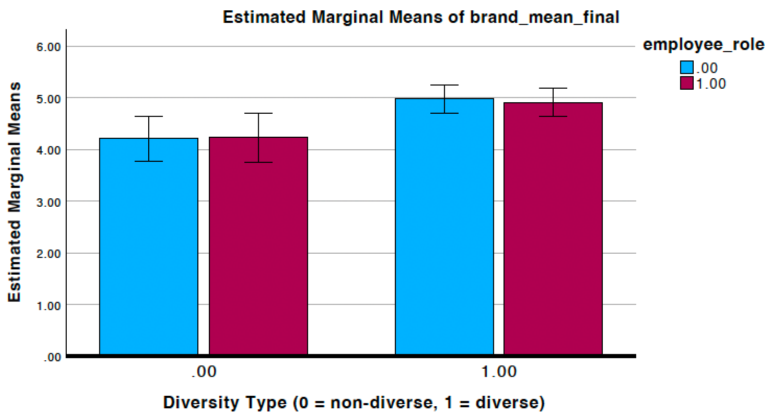
Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	4.337	.697	6.219	<.001	2.959
luxury	.090	.058	1.561	.120	-.024
age	.005	.009	.564	.574	-.012
gender	.120	.169	.712	.478	-.214
SES	-.020	.048	-.410	.682	-.115
Q18	-.014	.094	-.153	.879	-.200
[diversity_type=,00]	-.684	.284	-2.413	.017	-1.244
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.066	.201	.328	.743	-.331
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	-.079	.386	-.204	.838	-.841
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: brand_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.714	.198
luxury	.204	.015
age	.022	.002
gender	.455	.003
SES	.075	.001
Q18	.171	.000
[diversity_type=,00]	-.124	.036
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.463	.001
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.683	.000
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How interested are you in luxury brands? = 3.92, What is your age? = 28.0422, What is your gender? = 1.64, What is your yearly household income (before taxes)? = 2.98, How often do you purchase luxury products (e.g., fashion, accessories, cosmetics, watches)? = 3.77

Error bars: 95% CI

F2. Brand Attitude

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	34.710[a]	8	4.339	2.767	.007
Intercept	29.194	1	29.194	18.620	<.001
luxury	16.664	1	16.664	10.628	.001
age	.243	1	.243	.155	.694
gender	1.514	1	1.514	.966	.327
SES	.759	1	.759	.484	.488
Q18	.675	1	.675	.431	.513
diversity_type	4.665	1	4.665	2.976	.087
employee_role	1.458	1	1.458	.930	.336
diversity_type * employee_role	1.883	1	1.883	1.201	.275
Error	232.045	148	1.568		
Total	4879.500	157			
Corrected Total	266.755	156			

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.130
Intercept	.112
luxury	.067
age	.001
gender	.006
SES	.003
Q18	.003
diversity_type	.020
employee_role	.006
diversity_type * employee_role	.008
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .130 (Adjusted R Squared = .083)

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

F	df1	df2	Sig.
.694	3	153	.557

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + luxury + age + gender + SES + Q18 + diversity_type + employee_role + diversity_type * employee_role

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

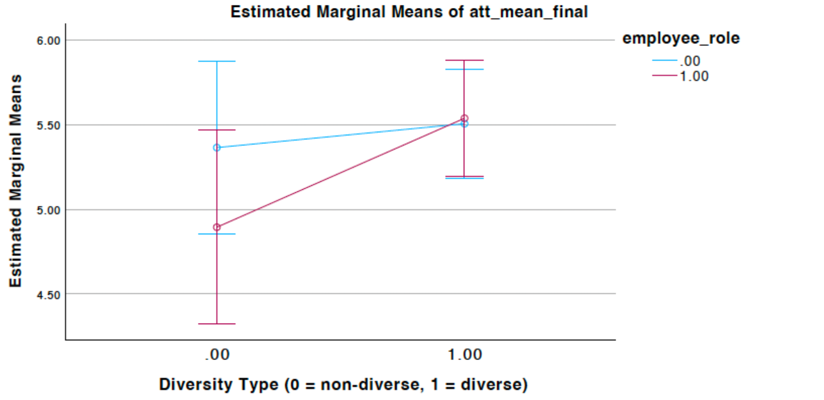
Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	4.022	.893	4.501	<.001	2.256
luxury	.235	.072	3.260	.001	.093
age	-.005	.012	-.394	.694	-.028
gender	.195	.198	.983	.327	-.197
SES	.039	.056	.696	.488	-.071
Q18	.078	.119	.656	.513	-.157
[diversity_type=,00]	-.643	.337	-1.905	.059	-1.310
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	-.032	.239	-.134	.894	-.505
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.502	.458	1.096	.275	-.403
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: att_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.787	.120
luxury	.378	.067
age	.019	.001
gender	.587	.006
SES	.149	.003
Q18	.313	.003
[diversity_type=,00]	.024	.024
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.441	.000
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	1.406	.008
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How interested are you in luxury brands? = 3.89, What is your age? = 27.0828, What is your gender? = 1.65, What is your yearly household income (before taxes)? = 2.96, How often do you purchase luxury products (e.g., fashion, accessories, cosmetics, watches)? = 3.75

Error bars: 95% CI

F3. Purchase Intentions

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	62.435[a]	8	7.804	3.530	<.001
Intercept	16.856	1	16.856	7.625	.006
luxury	25.068	1	25.068	11.339	<.001
age	2.473	1	2.473	1.119	.292
gender	.134	1	.134	.060	.806
SES	4.112	1	4.112	1.860	.175
Q18	.329	1	.329	.149	.700
diversity_type	.692	1	.692	.313	.577
employee_role	3.187	1	3.187	1.442	.232
diversity_type * employee_role	.009	1	.009	.004	.949
Error	344.874	156	2.211		
Total	3394.000	165			
Corrected Total	407.309	164			

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

F	df1	df2	Sig.
3.620	3	161	.014

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + luxury + age + gender + SES + Q18 + diversity_type + employee_role + diversity_type * employee_role

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.153
Intercept	.047
luxury	.068
age	.007
gender	.000
SES	.012
Q18	.001
diversity_type	.002
employee_role	.009
diversity_type * employee_role	.000
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .153 (Adjusted R Squared = .110)

Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound
Intercept	2.549	.968	2.634	.009	.638
luxury	.266	.079	3.367	<.001	.110
age	.013	.013	1.058	.292	-.012
gender	.057	.232	.246	.806	-.401
SES	.090	.066	1.364	.175	-.040
Q18	-.050	.129	-.386	.700	-.304
[diversity_type=,00]	-.163	.381	-.428	.669	-.917
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.297	.278	1.070	.286	-.251
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.034	.524	.064	.949	-1.002
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.

Parameter Estimates

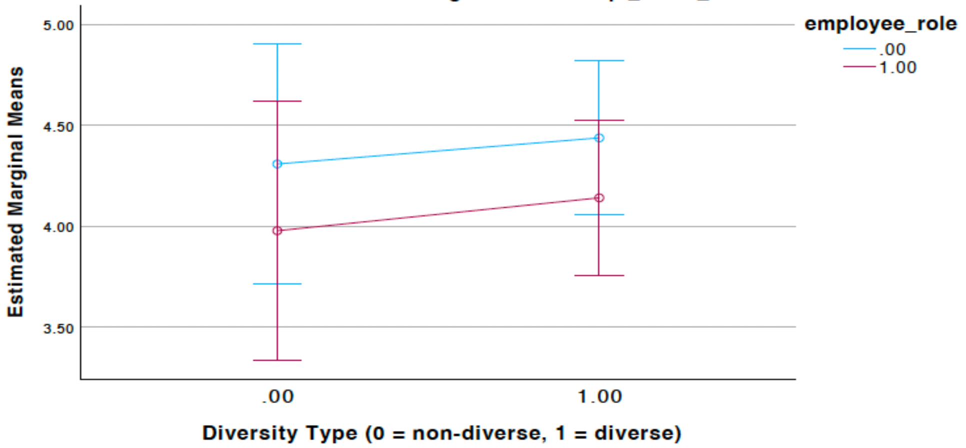
Dependent Variable: pi_mean_final

Parameter	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	4.461	.043
luxury	.421	.068
age	.038	.007
gender	.515	.000
SES	.219	.012
Q18	.205	.001
[diversity_type=,00]	.590	.001
[diversity_type=1,00]	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.846	.007
[employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	1.069	.000
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots

Estimated Marginal Means of pi_mean_final



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How interested are you in luxury brands? = 3.95, What is your age? = 27.7152, What is your gender? = 1.65, What is your yearly household income (before taxes)? = 2.96, How often do you purchase luxury products (e.g., fashion, accessories, cosmetics, watches)? = 3.75

Error bars: 95% CI

F4. Person Evaluation

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6.939[a]	8	.867	.964	.467
Intercept	65.098	1	65.098	72.323	<.001
luxury	2.758	1	2.758	3.064	.082
age	.030	1	.030	.034	.855
gender	.006	1	.006	.006	.937
SES	.444	1	.444	.493	.484
Q18	.028	1	.028	.031	.861
diversity_type	.530	1	.530	.589	.444
employee_role	1.049	1	1.049	1.165	.282
diversity_type * employee_role	.022	1	.022	.024	.877
Error	141.316	157	.900		
Total	5025.063	166			
Corrected Total	148.255	165			

Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances[a]

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

F	df1	df2	Sig.
1.246	3	162	.295

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + luxury + age + gender + SES + Q18 + diversity_type + employee_role + diversity_type * employee_role

Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Source	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	.047
Intercept	.315
luxury	.019
age	.000
gender	.000
SES	.003
Q18	.000
diversity_type	.004
employee_role	.007
diversity_type * employee_role	.000
Error	
Total	
Corrected Total	

a. R Squared = .047 (Adjusted R Squared = -.002)

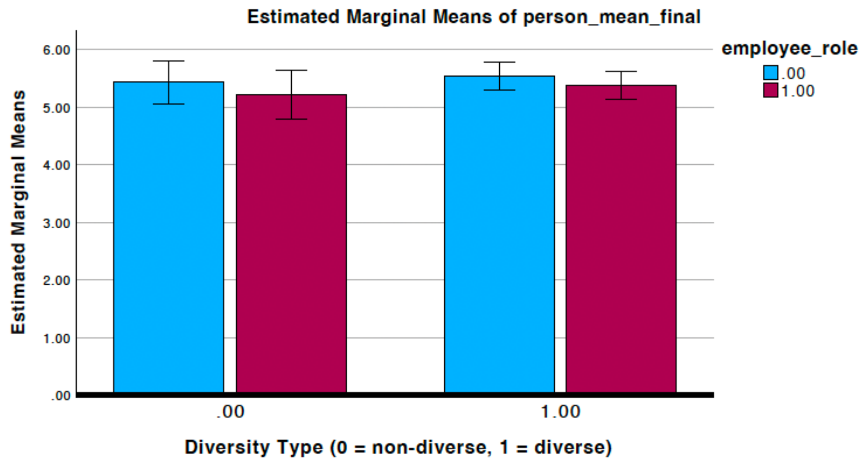
Parameter Estimates

Dependent Variable: person_mean_final

Parameter	B	Std. Error	t	Sig.	95% ... Lower Bound	95% ... Upper Bound	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	5.083	.608	8.362	<.001	3.882	6.283	.308
luxury	.088	.050	1.750	.082	-.011	.187	.019
age	-.001	.008	-.183	.855	-.016	.014	.000
gender	.012	.147	.079	.937	-.280	.303	.000
SES	-.029	.042	-.702	.484	-.112	.053	.003
Q18	.014	.082	.176	.861	-.147	.176	.000
[diversity_type=,00]	-.155	.247	-.628	.531	-.643	.333	.003
[diversity_type=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.	.
[employee_role=,00]	.155	.175	.885	.377	-.191	.501	.005
[employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=,00]	.052	.336	.155	.877	-.612	.716	.000
[diversity_type=,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.	.
[diversity_type=1,00] * [employee_role=1,00]	0[a]	.	.	.	.	.	.

a. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

Profile Plots



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: How interested are you in luxury brands? = 3.92, What is your age? = 28.0422, What is your gender? = 1.64, What is your yearly household income (before taxes)? = 2.98, How often do you purchase luxury products (e.g., fashion, accessories, cosmetics, watches)? = 3.77

Error bars: 95% CI

F5. Assumption Checks

(1) Brand Innovativeness

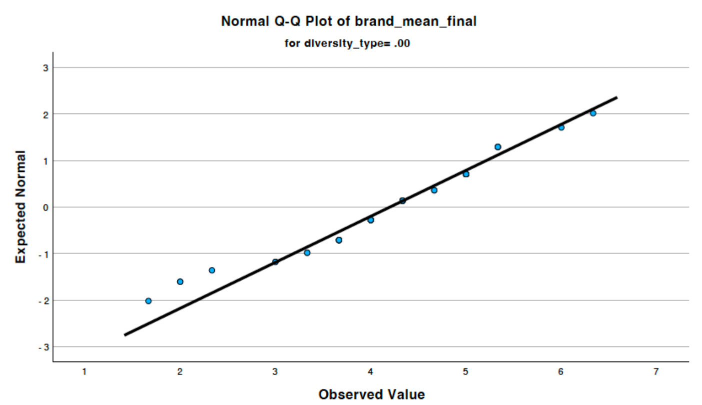
Tests of Normality

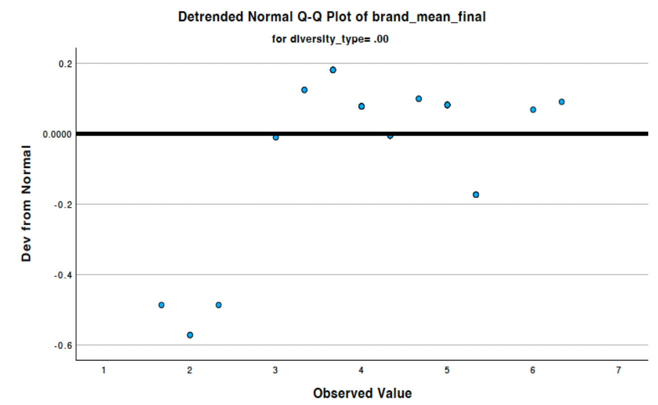
	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro-.. Statistic
brand_mean_final	.00	.133	45	.045	.953
	1.00	.132	123	<.001	.963

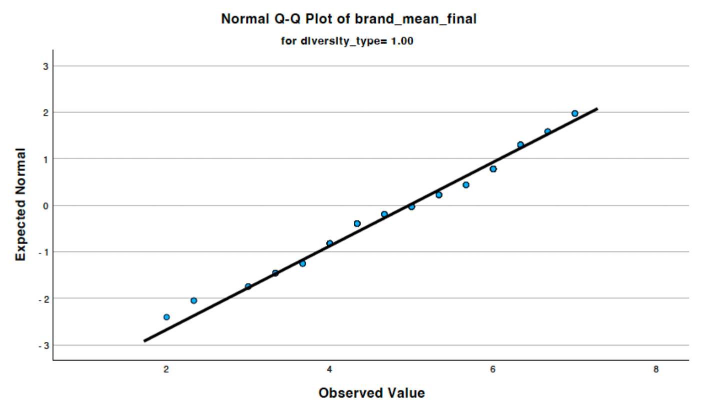
Tests of Normality

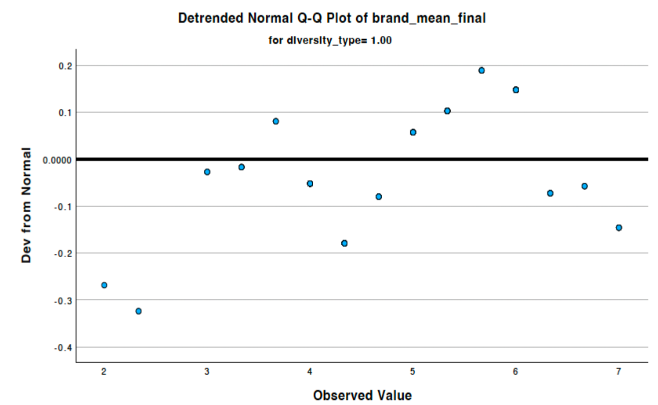
	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Shapiro-Wilk df	Sig.
brand_mean_final	.00	45	.066
	1.00	123	.002

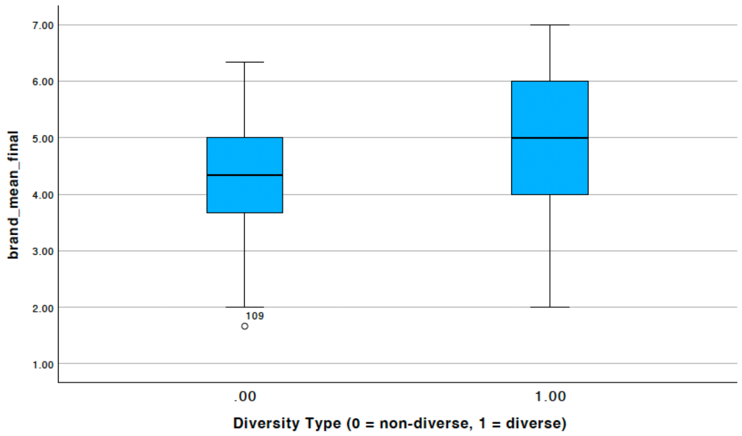
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction











employee_role

Case Processing Summary

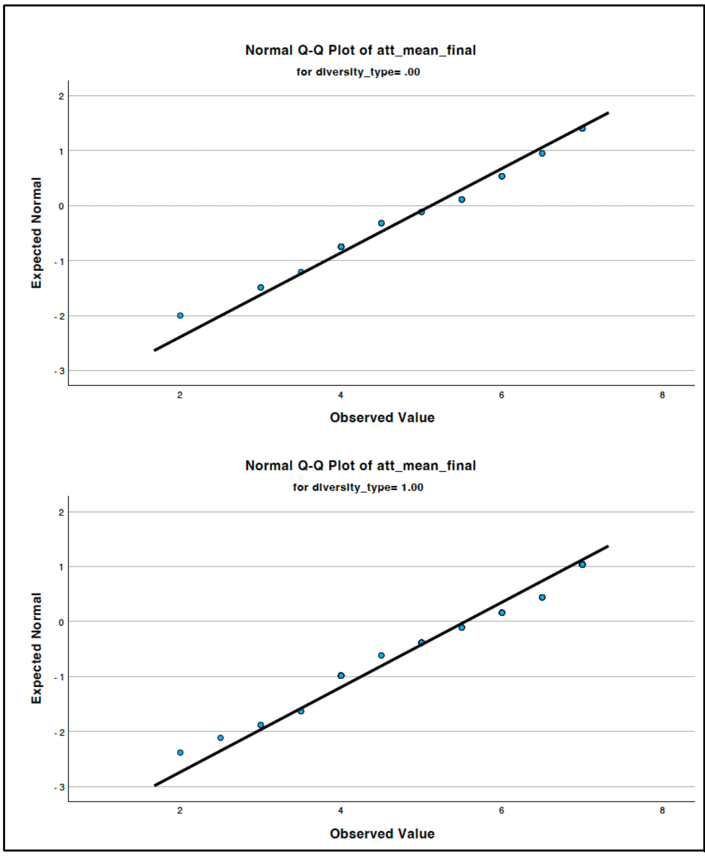
		Cases					
		Valid		Missing		Total	
	employee_role	N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
brand_mean_final	.00	87	92.6%	7	7.4%	94	100.0%
	1.00	81	98.8%	1	1.2%	82	100.0%

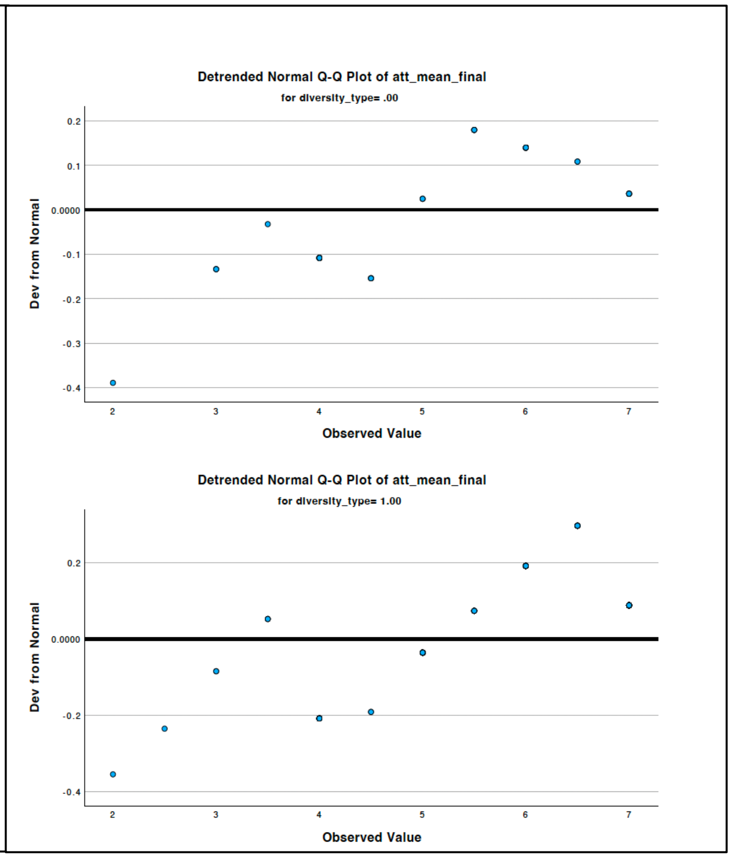
(2) *Brand Attitude*

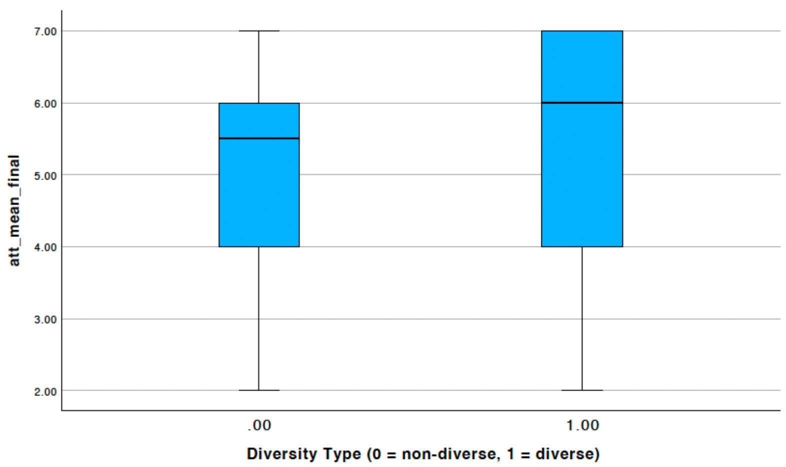
Tests of Normality

	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
att_mean_final	.00	.146	43	.021	.942	43	.031
	1.00	.163	116	<.001	.890	116	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction







employee_role

Case Processing Summary

	employee_role	Cases Valid N	Valid Percent	Missing N	Missing Percent	Total N
att_mean_final	.00	85	90.4%	9	9.6%	94
	1.00	74	90.2%	8	9.8%	82

Case Processing Summary

	employee_role	Cases Total Percent
att_mean_final	.00	100.0%
	1.00	100.0%

(3)Purchasing Intention

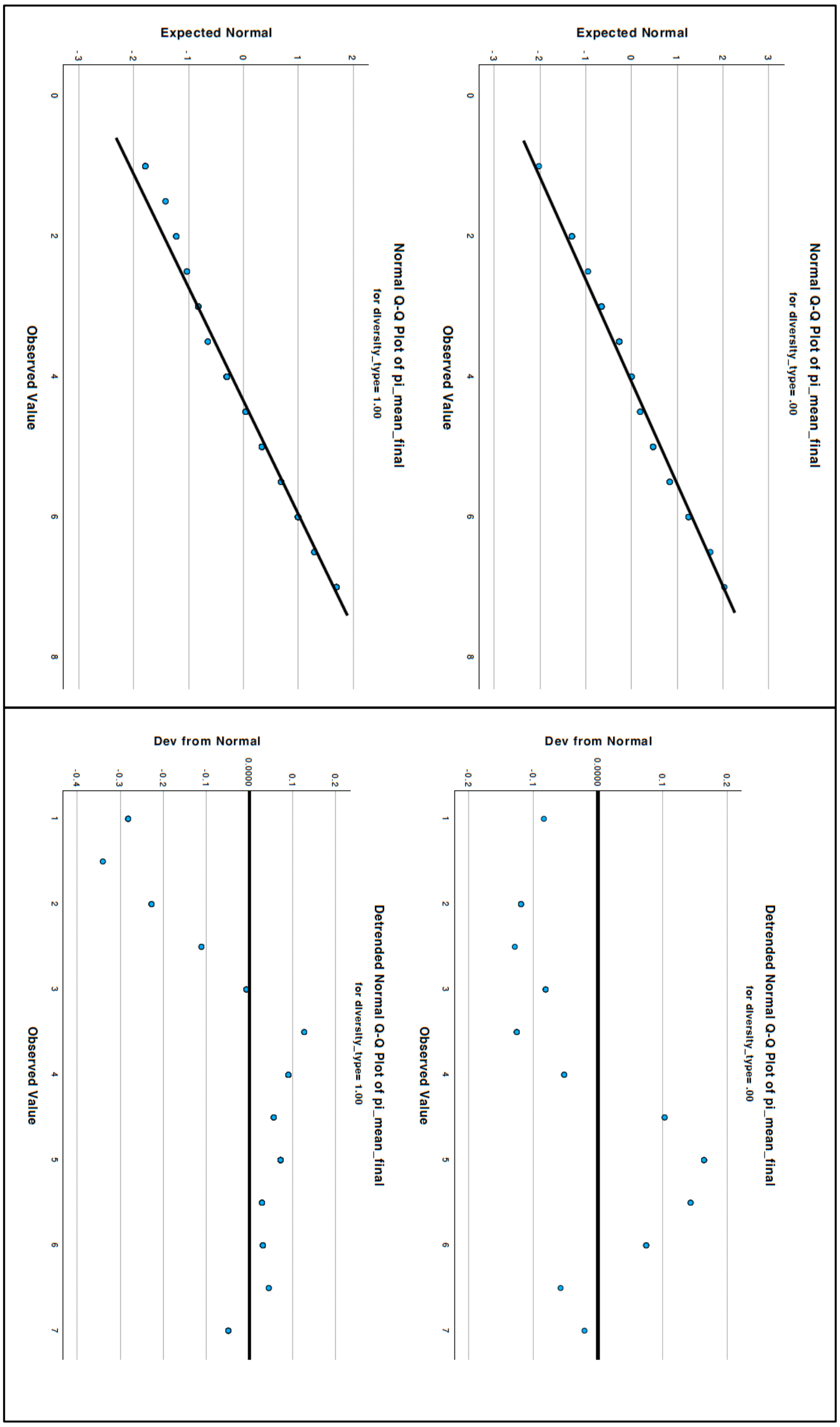
Tests of Normality

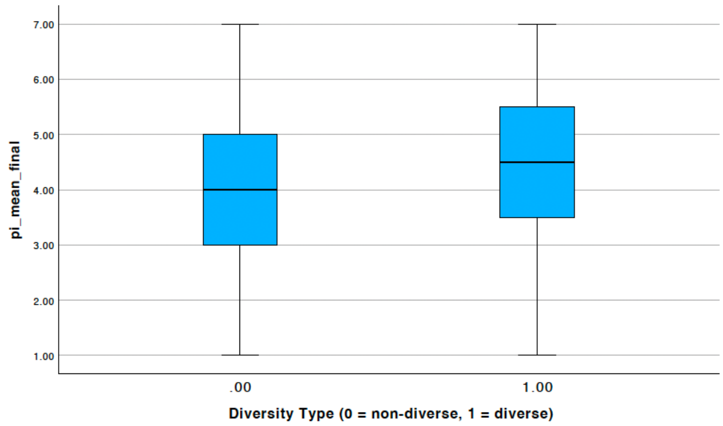
	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro-.. Statistic
pi_mean_final	.00	.128	46	.055	.964
	1.00	.143	121	<.001	.953

Tests of Normality

	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Shapiro-Wilk df	Sig.
pi_mean_final	.00	46	.170
	1.00	121	<.001

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction





employee_role

Case Processing Summary

	employee_role	Cases Valid N	Valid Percent	Missing N	Missing Percent	Total N	Total Percent
pi_mean_final	.00	86	91.5%	8	8.5%	94	100.0%
	1.00	81	98.8%	1	1.2%	82	100.0%

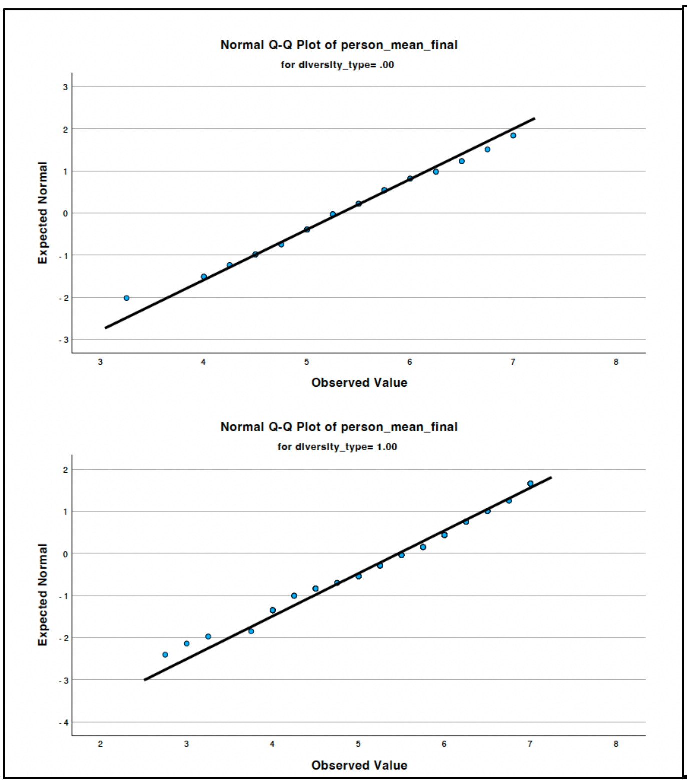
(4)Employee Evaluation

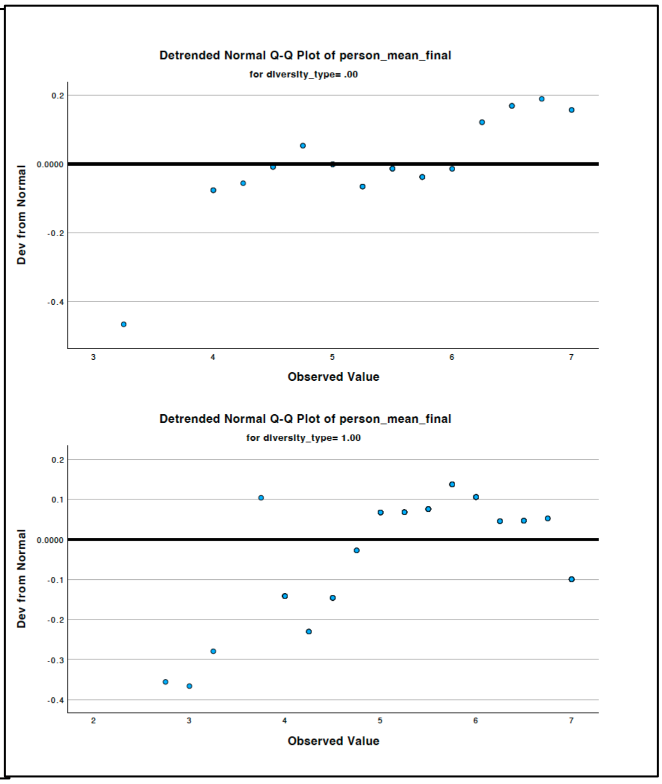
Tests of Normality

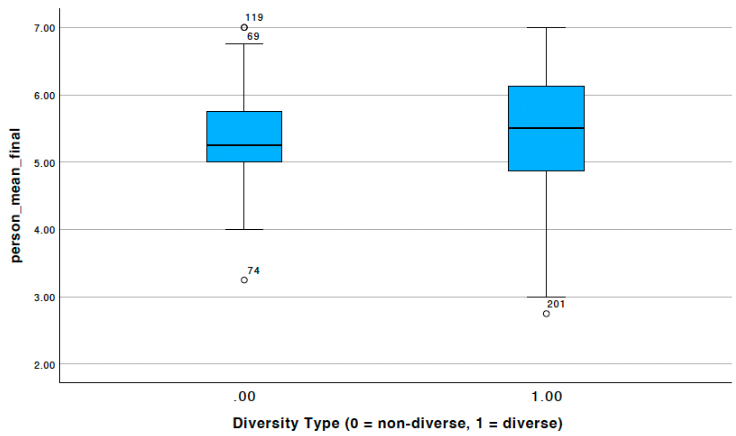
	Diversity Type (0 = non-diverse, 1 = diverse)	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a] Statistic	df	Sig.	Shapiro-Wilk Statistic	df	Sig.
person_mean_final	.00	.103	45	.200*	.981	45	.643
	1.00	.113	123	<.001	.961	123	.001

*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction







employee_role

Case Processing Summary

	employee_role	Cases Valid N	Valid Percent	Missing N	Missing Percent	Total N
person_mean_final	.00	87	92.6%	7	7.4%	94
	1.00	81	98.8%	1	1.2%	82

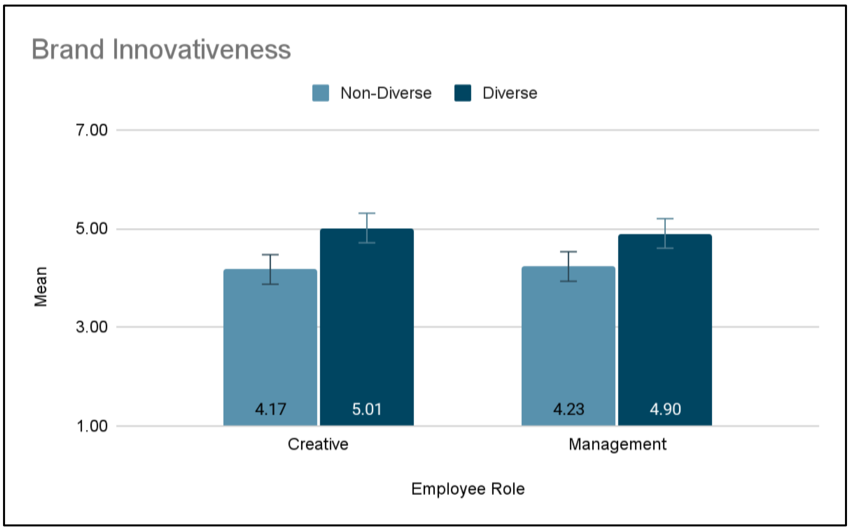
Case Processing Summary

	employee_role	Cases Total Percent
person_mean_final	.00	100.0%
	1.00	100.0%

Appendix G: Figures

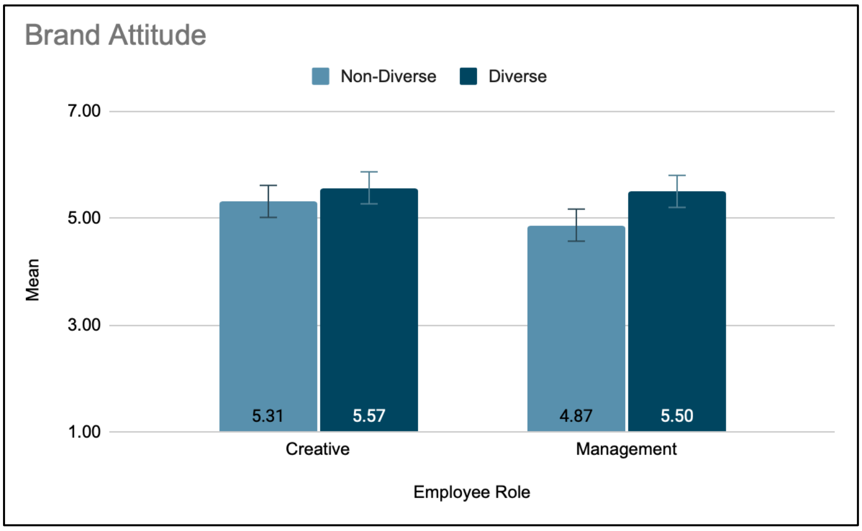
G1: Interaction Plots (2x2 Anova)

G1.1 Brand innovativeness



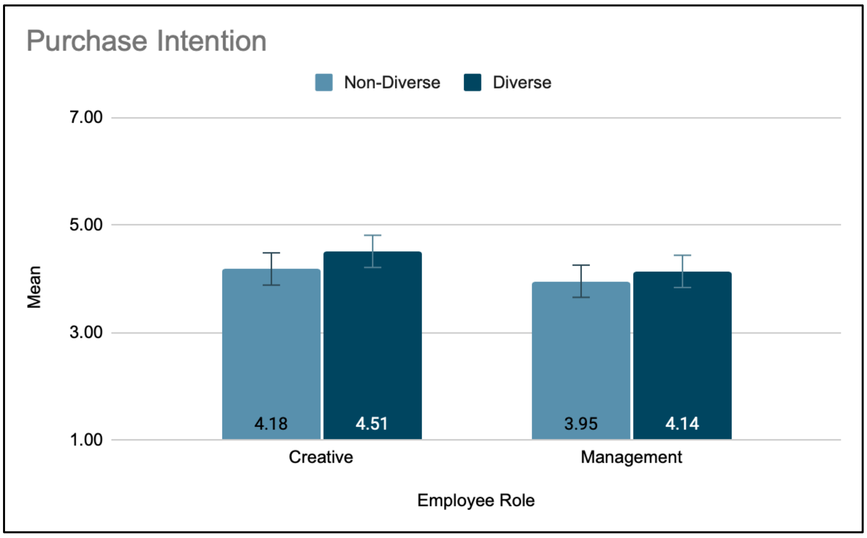
Estimated marginal means of brand innovativeness by diversity type and employee role. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

G 1.2 Brand Attitude



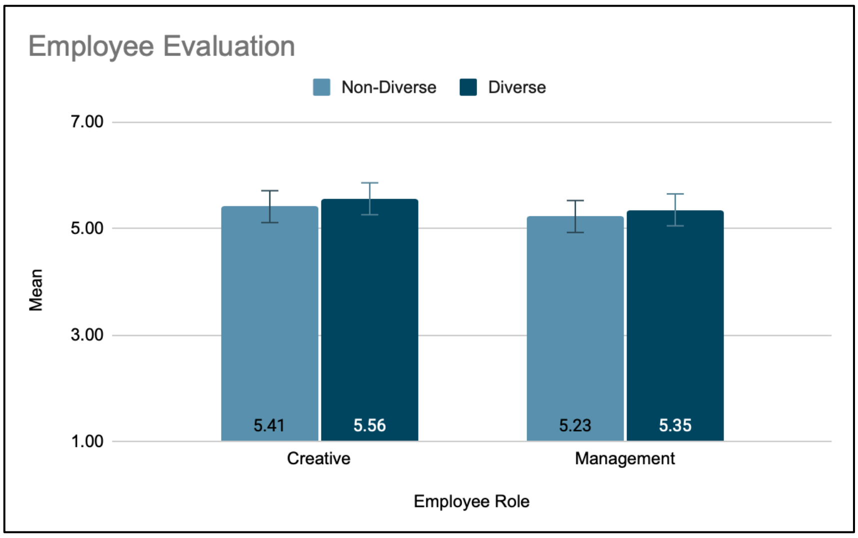
Estimated marginal means of brand attitude by diversity type and employee role. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

G1.3 Purchase Intention



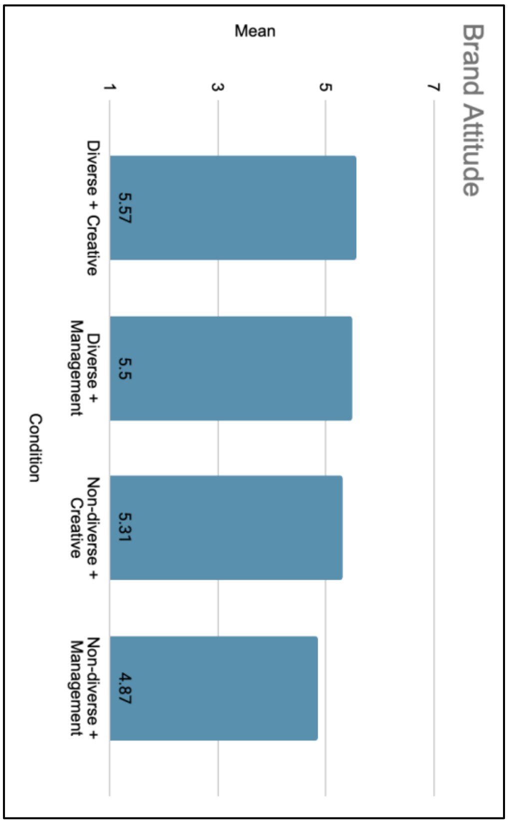
Estimated marginal means of purchase intention by diversity type and employee role. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

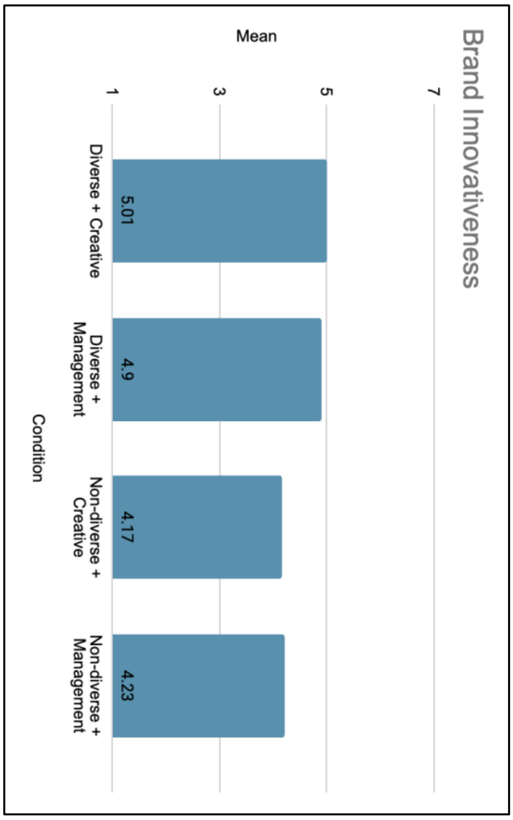
G1.4 Person Evaluation

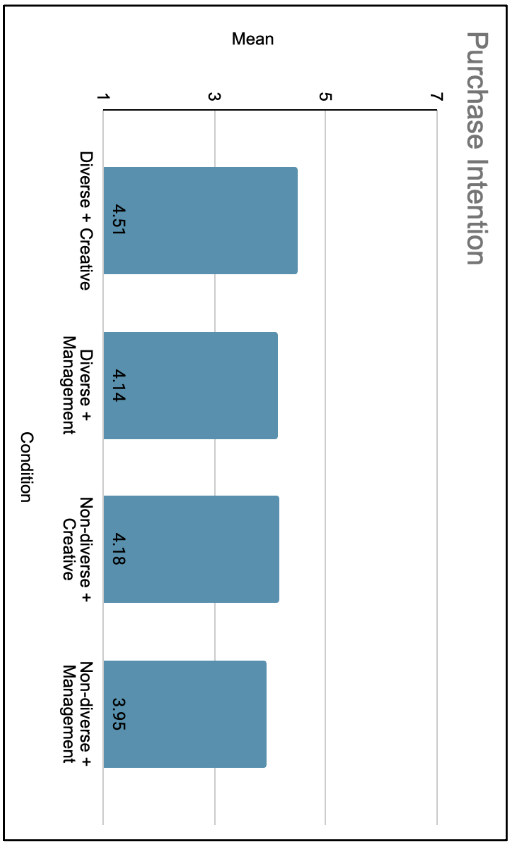


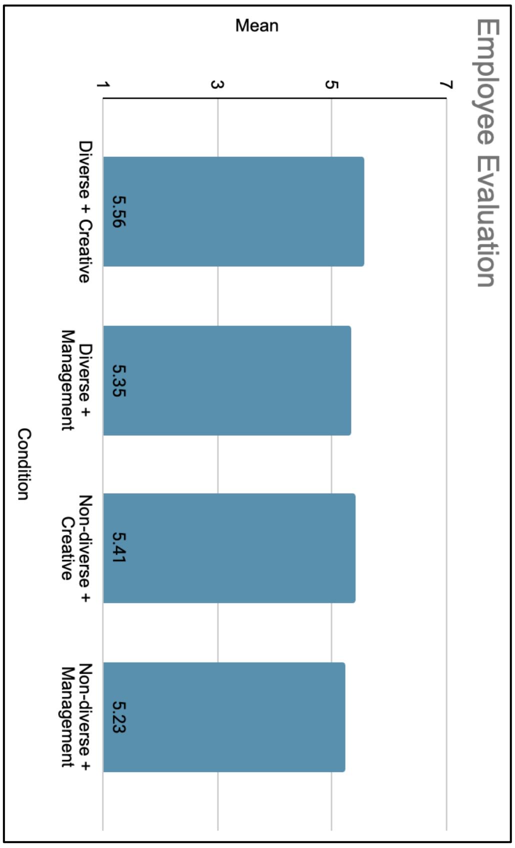
Estimated marginal means of employee evaluation by diversity type and employee role. Error bars represent 95% confidence intervals.

G2: Results by Condition (descriptive figures)



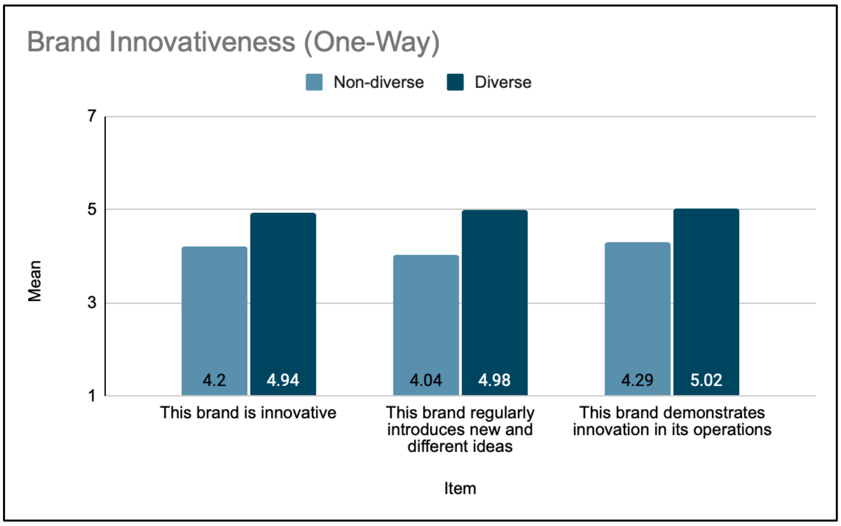






G3: Item-Level Results

Item-level analyses are reported only for brand innovativeness, as this was the only dependent variable showing a significant main effect.



Item-level mean differences for brand innovativeness by diversity type. Analyses are exploratory and descriptive in nature.

G4: Comparison of ANOVA and ANCOVA Results

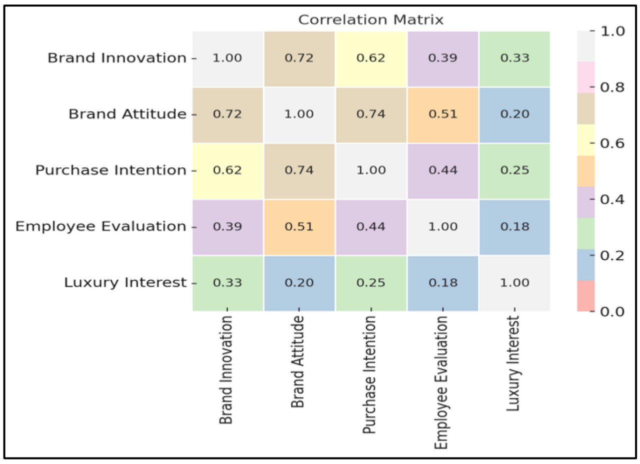
DVs	ANOVA F / p / η^2	ANCOVA F / p / η^2
Brand Innovativeness	11.16 / .001 / .063	10.56 / .001 / .062
Brand Attitude	3.76 / .054 / .024	2.15 / .144 / .014
Purchase Intention	n.s.	n.s.
Employee Evaluation (explorative)	n.s.	n.s.

(n.s. = not significant, ps > .30)

(Note. Covariates included age, gender, SES, and luxury interest.)

G5. Correlations

G5 presents Pearson correlation coefficients among the key dependent variables and luxury interest



Declaration of Authorship

I hereby declare that this master thesis is my independent work and has not been aided with any prohibited means. I declare, to the best of my knowledge and belief, that all text passages and lines of thought taken verbatim or in spirit from other works are identified by precise indication of the source in the form of annotations or in-text citations. This also applies to sources from the Internet, where the URL and date of access are also given.

AI-based tools (including ChatGPT and LM Notebooks) were used as supportive instruments during the preparation of this thesis. Their use was limited to linguistic editing, summarising academic sources for note-taking purposes, structural clarification, technical guidance related to SPSS/Qualtrics, and assistance with the preparation of tables and figures.

The paper has not been submitted to any other examining body and has not yet been published.