

Chapter 1

A question of luxury

‘Luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends.’

Gabrielle Coco Chanel (1883–1971)

When you flip through the pages of a fashion magazine, what do you see? An array of luxury fashion advertisements, featuring colourful and alluring pictures of models displaying products that tease your eyes and sensitivity. When you switch on the television, you’re constantly bombarded with celebrity news and reality shows that touch your natural human craving to feel beautiful, important and recognized. The gorgeous people in the magazines and on television unconsciously speak to you, telling you that their lifestyle and material possessions like their clothes and accessories can also make you beautiful and help you become a part of their world. All you need to do is to obtain the right fashion goods by the right designers. You then begin to crave the Gucci watch, the Louis Vuitton bag and the Chanel glasses, not to mention the Jimmy Choo shoes or the Bvlgari jewellery that beckon you every time you see a picture of a celebrity icon. Welcome to the luxury fashion land. You’re not alone but a minute part of a world that constitutes of millions of people that have been hooked by the luxury fashion fever called brand loyalty. Don’t worry, this is not a sickness and you’re not a victim but it is a part of the definition of your personality and lifestyle. In this world, it is not easy to make an exit because it is quite challenging to be logical-thinking in the midst of luxury fashion goods.

When the fashion design icon Coco Chanel stated that ‘luxury is a necessity that begins where necessity ends’, she knew exactly what she was talking about. Also as far back as 1899, notable writer T.B. Veblen acknowledged in his celebrated text *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, that the consumption of luxury goods was a ‘*conspicuous waste*’. The truth is that we don’t need luxury goods to survive as human beings, but we need luxury goods to fuel the sensations that contribute to our overall appreciation of ourselves and our lives. It may sound uncanny but the appealing brand features that luxury fashion represents contribute to our general well-being.

Still in doubt? Then think about this. On a daily basis, we make most of life’s decisions based on brands, beginning with the toothpaste we use in the morning to the cereal we have for breakfast, the car we drive, the phone we use, the restaurants we eat in and also the toilet paper we use. We make daily

purchases based on the trust we have that the consistent promises of a brand will be delivered. Now take this trust for basic consumer goods to the higher level of luxury fashion and you'll find that you have even greater brand promises and more reinforcement that they will be delivered. This increases your level of trust. And when your expectations are met and exceeded, what do you think will be the result? Of course you'll be hooked. If you can place your trust in a toilet paper or detergent manufacturing company every time you spend two dollars on their product, then what level of trust do you think you'll have for a high fashion brand that contributes to shaping your lifestyle and defining your identity? It is likely to be enormous. And this is what luxury is all about.

Fashion is not only a matter of clothes and accessories but is also highly influential in structuring society's culture, identity and lifestyle. Luxury fashion even goes further to reinforce the evolution and voice of society. In this generation where image underlies every aspect of our lives, luxury brands have gained more prominence and are affecting the daily lives of both consumers and non-consumers on a greater level.

An intelligent, pragmatic and highly educated friend once told me that she would rather not wear sunglasses than wear ones that are not made by Gucci. She has been a loyal Gucci sunglasses devotee from the day she bought her first Gucci sunglasses many years ago. She also wears prescription glasses and the first time she went for her eyeglass fitting in London, the optician was out of stock of her desired Gucci frames. She didn't mind waiting for one month for the frames to arrive, in the meantime straining her eyes daily and risking her vision, such was her level of love and loyalty to Gucci. Of course she knew that she wouldn't become blind but she was ready to jeopardize her faltering vision for the love of a luxury brand. When I raised this point, she simply said that I might not understand the intense contentment she feels each time she wore her Gucci glasses. This emotional core that the Gucci brand touched in my friend is the impact luxury brands have on consumers on a daily basis all over the world. When a consumer wants a luxury brand, there is no substitute. Such is the mind-game that 'high branding' plays with consumers. Again, this is luxury.

So what is luxury fashion branding all about?

First, let's look at the concept of branding. Brands are powerful and symbolic elements that have the potential of influencing cultures, societies and generations. They play a daily role in our lives from the product decisions and choices we make to the people we choose to speak to or associate with. They are also wealth-creators and a source of a steady income stream for the companies that own them. These statements will become clearer as you read further.

The concept of branding has been in existence for hundreds of years. The origin of brands comes from the times when early cattle-rearing men stamped their ownership on their livestock by burning a mark of their name or identity on the cattle, to distinguish one cattle-farmer's stock from another's. Through this means of differentiation, the good quality cattle could be easily identified. This crude method has translated into the trademarks and logos of today, which forms a crucial part of the brand.

The current definition of a brand has however evolved from marks, names, logos and shapes to elaborate marketing development and strategies. The result is the creation of something powerful and consistent, which has the ability to produce emotional and psychological attachment with consumers and financial value for the brand owner.

A brand symbolizes a guarantee and credibility that assures the consumer that what they are about to purchase will deliver its promise. The instant recognition and definition of certain products is mainly as a result of the brand. However, a product is not a brand and neither is a service a brand nor a company a brand. If we were to go by the book definition of branding from the experts, we might summarize branding as the following:

A brand is a name, term, sign, symbol, design or a combination of these that is intended to identify the product of a seller and to differentiate it from those of competitors. It is an identifiable entity of a company's total offerings that makes specific and consistent promises of value, which results in an overall experience for the consumer or anyone who comes in contact with the brand.

A product is a commodity that is made in a factory, which possesses attributes and features, making it tangible. A brand is the sum of all experiences and communications received by the consumer resulting in a distinctive image in their mind-set based on perceived functional and emotional benefits, which makes it intangible. This means that branding and all its associations reside in the mind of the consumer, therefore you and I (the consumers) are important players in the branding scenario. Products can be easily copied and become outdated, but brands are unique and timeless.

Branding has become very prominent in the last fifty years as a core aspect of marketing and business strategy. The concept has been stretched beyond the product or service application level to become one of the most important business categories. As a modern concept, branding can be applied to anything from products and services, to companies, countries and even individuals.

Every brand possesses the characteristics of identity, promise, value and differentiation. These are the features that create the relationship between the consumer and the brand. The fundamental benefit of a brand is value-creation both for the brand owner and the consumer. From the consumer perspective it is 'the promise and delivery of an experience', while from a business

perspective it is ‘a distinguishable piece of intellectual property and an intangible asset that secures future earnings.’

Having said this, let’s now look at luxury goods and their interesting position in the whole branding set-up.

The luxury and prestige fashion goods sector utilizes fierce brand development strategies in its overall marketing strategy development, visibly in communications. Luxury brands recognize that the art of product design, innovation and aesthetic beauty can only be effectively portrayed through creating strong brands that appeal to the psychology of consumers. Branding is the lifeline of the luxury industry while design and creativity are its bedrocks. Without branding, there would be no luxury goods.

Luxury fashion brands strive for innovation, differentiation and appeal. This is because the fashion business is forward-thinking. Fashion always incorporates the past and the future and is hardly preoccupied with the present. It draws inspiration from the past in order to create the desire of the future. The present is only a temporary phase because if fashion is here today, it is already old-fashioned. This is where the role of branding is most prominent because it fuels the continuous desire of luxury products despite the constant changes of fashion.

Luxury brands set the fashion trends for every season during the fashion weeks held in Paris, Milan, New York, London and other prominent cities. In the past century, haute couture designers like Christian Dior and Valentino decreed the colour of every fashion season and the cut of every jacket through their designs. Presently, the scenario is gradually changing as a result of a wider choice and variety in brand and product offering fuelled by branding. However, luxury fashion designers are still considered like demi-gods in the fashion business. They tell the consumer public what to wear and not to wear, indirectly determining the tastes of the fashion society. If Marc Jacobs of Louis Vuitton showcases white as the colour of a fashion season; behold the world of fashion adopts white. If Karl Lagerfeld at Chanel decides that wedges should be the must-have accessories for a fashion season, then wedges it must be. If Jean-Paul Gaultier at Hermès rises in the morning and is suddenly inspired by a dream he had of an African safari trip, he can decide that zebra prints are the new season’s fashion flag and so it will be. The consumer population awaits the judgements of these luxury fashion designers and the mass fashion brands take the dictation of these trends to the mass-production manufacturing factory.

But you may ask; who bestows the luxury fashion designers and their brands with such powers? How can we trust their opinions without question and how can the fashion population become like enthusiastic robots under their control? The answer is simple: luxury brands have the power of **BRANDING!** If you believe that brands like Dior or Gucci have the absolute prerogative to determine the appearance of the entire global fashion consumer

population every season, then you've acceded to the absolutely powerful and commanding brand strengths of luxury brands.

Now, take a look at the following brand logos:



The brand symbols shown are a mixture of luxury and prestige, premium and mass fashion brands. When you looked at each of the logos, something happened in your mind. You had a thought about every one of the brands, no matter how fleeting. Now take another look at the logos, this time a little bit longer. What connotations do you have from your perceptions of each of the brands? If you make a note of them, you'll discover from your list that you already have an idea of their brand attributes, brand strengths and their level of influence. You can gauge the brands that are likely to have a high brand asset value, even without looking at their financial figures. If this is the case, then you already know exactly what I'm talking about!

We as consumers expect luxury brands to be innovative in designing products and in creating trends. We don't expect them to wait around to understand what we want before creating them. We desire for them to understand our psychology, changing tastes and way of thinking before even we do! We expect them to be ahead of the game. We want them to analyse the current trends, evaluate what needs to be changed, and to innovate and produce desirable products that will appeal to us. And this is what true luxury brands do. However, the magical offerings of luxury brands is reinforced through branding.

Luxury brands didn't happen by accident. There is no such thing. They have been uniquely crafted through consistent and diligent strategies in branding, marketing strategy. They enjoy a specific position in the global consumer world and branding spectrum as well as in the consumer's subconscious.

The core characteristics of luxury brands are: *brand strength, differentiation, exclusivity, innovation, product craftsmanship and precision, premium pricing and high-quality*. It is the *differentiated* quality of the materials, design and performance of a wristwatch from Chanel that separates it from a basic functional watch sold at a supermarket. As a result, Chanel can charge a premium price of \$3,000 and the supermarket \$30. It is also as a result of the foresight and innovation characteristics of Louis Vuitton that the brand introduced the canvas in the nineteenth century. It is the *craftsmanship* and *precision* qualities that result in an eighteen-hour manufacturing process of one Hermès Kelly bag by a single workman, from start to finish. It is the

high-quality feature that has resulted in the high cost of the Hermès Birkin bag, which is equivalent to two first-class tickets from Paris to New York. It is the *strong brand image* of Gucci that results in several of the brand's products being back-ordered for up to two years. The end result of all these characteristics is of course the creation of brand value, which translates into billions of dollars in revenues and an indispensable intangible asset for the companies. The brand value is also related to consumers, who attain an immeasurable level of satisfaction from luxury fashion products.

The following chapters explore the deep and intriguing subject of branding and other business aspects related to luxury fashion goods. This is what this book is all about.

Chapter 2

What's in a name?

The history of luxury fashion branding

'What is in a name? That which we call a rose, by any other name would smell as sweet.'

William Shakespeare, English playwright (1564–1616)

In the quote above, legendary English playwright William Shakespeare raised an age-old question, 'What is in a name?' In the luxury fashion branding scene, the 'name', in other words the 'brand name', is everything. This is because it is the 'brand name' and the 'brand logo' that attracts consumers to a brand and launches the often enduring relationship between them and their chosen luxury brand.

Shakespeare indicated that if a rose were to be known by another name, it would still smell as sweet. Does the same principle apply to the luxury fashion sector? Would brands like Louis Vuitton and Giorgio Armani have the same associative elements and success if the names of their founders were different? The answers to these questions will become clear as we take a trip down the history lane to the origins of branding and the evolution of the global luxury fashion sector.

Branding evolution

The notion of branding as part of ancient trading can be traced to the Greek and Roman empires, before the modern industrial revolution. During this period, market awareness was created through carving out shop route signs and product descriptions, in stone along footpaths. This method progressed on to the early sixteenth century when whisky distillers began to ship their products in wooden barrels with the name of the producer burned into them. The sole purpose of this method was to differentiate the maker of each type of whisky from his competitors and to aid consumers in identifying the original products from cheaper substitutes.

Branding can also be traced back to pre-historic times when cattle-rearing men imprinted their names or a distinctive mark on their livestock to differentiate one farmer's livestock from the others. This system was also used to separate the good quality cattle from the low quality ones, and helped consumers to make better purchasing decisions by associating certain attributes to certain cattle farmers.

These elementary methods indicate that early traders understood the underlying principles of branding even without exposure to sophisticated business techniques.

The development of branding was further enhanced by the industrial revolution, urbanization, improvements in transportation and the social infrastructure, beginning from the late eighteenth century. This period brought about the introduction of city signs on products as a form of brand symbol. The method was adopted to indicate the origin of products, which often had certain 'associations' and 'perceptions' among consumers. Certain product manufacturers such as Twining of England introduced branded products as early as 1706. It was also in this century that Schweppes introduced its branded drinks in 1798. Branding methods, however, became more prominent towards the end of the industrial revolution in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Branding, as we know it today, has advanced from crude methods of differentiation to a refined and indispensable business concept for any enterprise that desires long-term benefits. It plays a key role as the most important intangible asset generator for an organization. The luxury fashion sector in particular recognizes the crucial role of branding and therefore applies branding as a core competence and central factor of all business strategies.

Origins of luxury fashion

The history of luxury fashion is similar to that of branding in terms of development from ancient to modern times. Fashion's history has, however, been written about extensively by those more qualified than myself to do so; therefore its repetition is not the purpose of this chapter. However, there are key periods, events and circumstances that led to the evolution of modern luxury branding, which are worth recounting. For example, events following the industrial revolution brought about mass production techniques and led the way for the current prêt-à-porter fashion. Also, the dissolution of the world's monarchies, aristocracy and social class systems brought a change in luxury fashion, notably after the First World War. These factors show an important link between fashion and mankind's history and social evolution.

Fashion is a symbol of society and has continuously been influenced by historical, social, traditional, religious, political, economic, psychological and more recently technological changes. The luxury industry has also witnessed

these aspects of evolution and like fine sculpture, the old luxury brands have become modified and enhanced with age; and the new brands have become highly appealing with the aid of effective modern techniques. Several of today's largest and most valuable luxury brands like Louis Vuitton, Guerlain and Gucci originated in France and Italy in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and therefore have a long history. These brands and their countries of origin have played a key role in the development of the global fashion industry. The twentieth century also produced several American brands like Ralph Lauren and Donna Karan; as well as Far Eastern brands like Yoji Yamamoto and Issey Miyake. In addition, other respectable global luxury brands such as Burberry of Britain have a strong historical legacy surrounding their creation.

A look at the very beginnings of luxury fashion will provide some direction to the analysis and understanding of the current luxury fashion scene.

Early civilization fashion (3200 BC to 80 BC)

The concept of beauty and its association with human beings can be traced to the Christian Bible, when Eve, the first woman created by God according to Christian beliefs, placed a flower over her ear to make herself more beautiful and attractive to Adam, the first man. The Bible also provides other historical accounts of the lavish consumption of luxury materials like gold, silver and myrrh during the times of King David, King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba, particularly between 1010 BC and beyond 100 BC. These give evidence of the early appreciation of the notion of luxury and beauty by man.

However, the concept of luxury and its association to appearance, beauty and fashion evidently became prominent during the ancient Egyptian civilization of this period. Early Egyptian art reveals the intricate detailing and prominence of clothes and accessories such as headgears, crowns and jewellery, made of fine materials like gold. Also, the Pharaoh exemplified luxury dressing and opulence through his total control of all aspects of society, including appearance. His perception as both a leader and a representation of God heightened fashion opulence in this era as his subjects related to his appearance. The royal Pharaohs dressed flamboyantly and engaged the services of the best artistes, jewellers, craftsmen and designers to fabricate their wardrobe. The finest materials were used to produce their fashion goods, including footwear, which were often made of pure gold.

In this society, tradition and religion were deep-seated and clothing and appearance played a key role during religious and social ceremonies. Also the Egyptian belief in life after death and the elaborate rituals that were performed during burial ceremonies of dead nobles (involving dressing and mummifying them), reinforced the role of luxury in clothing and beautifying corpses. For these ceremonies, the best and most talented designers and craftsmen were used.

The visual representation of fashion was a key aspect of early Egyptian society, and men and women both wore jewellery, and made-to-measure attires, mostly in linen. The colours and styles of jewellery were specifically selected to complement each type of clothing similar to the fashion pairings of today. Personal hygiene was also important in this society shown through a highly developed cosmetics sector. Men and women used make-up, notably on their eyes. Their product assortments also included pomades and moisturizers with ingredients ranging from honey, salt and milk. Perfumes and oils were used on skin and local tree formulas for tooth hygiene. The women also used strict beauty procedures and treatments like massages to stay slim and fresh. It can be concluded that members of this society were almost obsessed with perfecting their bodies, and may be compared to the fitness and well-being consciousness of our current society.

Evidence of this society's important attachment to luxury, beauty and fashion can also be seen in the paintings of the period, which clearly showed the social class system that ruled the society and the material opulence that was associated with the upper social class. Naturally, the luxuries of the day were reserved for members of the royal families and the upper social class and an individual's style of dressing indicated their position in society. Also, the house designs and tombs and pyramids constructed during this era reflected the society's social status consciousness. Several discoveries have ascertained the high level of luxury consumption in this era, including a recent discovery, a shirt made of luxury linen around 1360 BC, which was displayed at the Victoria & Albert Museum, London, in early 2006.

The ancient Egyptians can be considered purveyors of the current global taste in luxury fashion goods. The elaborate designs and luxurious style of ancient Egyptian fashion has been a source of inspiration for several luxury fashion designers of today, including Salvatore Ferragamo and John Galliano, in addition to the numerous Hollywood movies that have been produced to recapture this period. Although no evidence of this exists, it can be imagined that the talented craftsmen and designers of the day had distinctive styles, or what are currently known as 'signatures', which differentiated their work and possibly brand names.

From Egypt to Crete and Greece (700 BC to 1150 BC)

The Cretan period also known as the Bronze Age was the first real period of European civilization and the fore era that influenced European fashion and lifestyle. Crete was the centre of bronze and ceramics production and exports and its structured system and emphasis on development ultimately influenced the fashion of the time. As time progressed and the society developed, fashion also developed. Researchers have found indications of permissive half-male nudity, where people working in production sites could wear only shorts. For the

women, who played traditional home-making roles, the story was a bit different. They showed their beauty through displaying elaborate belts on very slim waists that were acquired as a result of girdles worn around the waist from childhood. This can be related to the modern day fashionistas who sometimes starve themselves of food and undergo other forms of pain to appear thin and fashionable.

The Cretan era led to the early Greek civilization of the 4th and 5th centuries BC, whose society showed more attachment to luxury fashion. This period also witnessed the progress of politics, history, philosophy, maths, science, geometry and medicine. Its fashion representation was therefore a reflection of intellectual judgement and an indication of an individual's level of education and upbringing. It was also in this era that men and women's fashion gradually became separated. Women's dressing became feminine and elegant through style and fabric choice, while men's fashion became more structured and masculine. The luxury dimension of fashion was shown through the heavy use of jewellery to indicate the wealth of the wearer.

Appearance and grooming were important aspects of this society and the beauty sector was also well-developed. As early as the 4th century BC, make-up and cosmetics ranging from eye colours to foundation and lipstick were widely used by women. Also, make-up application techniques like the circular fingertips movement on the face, used by today's dermatologists, were introduced in this period. Moisturizers made from local ingredients were also used by day and masks were applied by night. Perfumes were also fabricated using the best scents and oils such as violet and myrrh. Each type of fragrance had a symbolic representation and was only applied to the appropriate and specific part of the body. Also, there was a special method for body-hair removal and hairstyles, especially for women, were also given great attention. Both men and women used massages and other therapeutic means for well-being and the men also exercised to stay in shape. These examples show that the society appreciated luxury living and beauty.

The Etruscan and Roman fashion influence (800 BC to AD 476)

The Etruscan Empire found in today's Tuscany region of Italy existed between Venice and Po and also included the present Rome. This empire was, however, eventually conquered by the Roman Empire.

This society was unique and maintained an independence from Greek and Asian cultural influences in its political, government and social development. The empire was rich in gold and its society portrayed luxury and beauty through the use of gold. Etruscan aristocratic women flaunted their status with heavy jewellery and somewhat introduced the modern bling-bling fashion style currently prominent in the United States. Make-up and cosmetics also played a key role in the fashion of this period.

The Roman Empire whose beginning has been traced to 1500 BC also played a key role in elevating fashion and incorporating it within the culture of society. The empire's high impact on world politics and trade led to the internationalization of fashion. This era is also considered as the true birth of the Italian fashion style.

Appearance was an important part of Roman culture and people went to great lengths to look good. Fashion was so much ingrained within this society that the ruling government decreed the models and colour of shoes of each social class because shoes represented a mark of distinction. This factor contributed to the influence of talented designers and shoe craftsmen who were sought after by the rich aristocrats and royal family members. The Italian shoe manufacturing industry which became prominent during this period continues to exist and is considered the most superior in the world.

Roman society also paved the way for several innovations in luxury fashion, still practised today. Notable among them are the following:

- 1 The concept of elevated fashion was introduced by the members of the royal family through elaborate dressing made with rare materials.
- 2 Seasonal fashion was invented to cater both for the changing weather conditions and the changing tastes of the fashion-conscious society.
- 3 Women's fashion was prominently separated from men's fashion, through the materials and colours used in the design and manufacture of clothes.
- 4 The legendary private thermal baths and saunas were invented as well as the rich ingredients that were used to nourish the body and improve the mind. This concept was also exported to the town of Bath in England, where the Roman Empire members owned private baths.
- 5 Exercise and balloon balls were invented to enhance appearance.

Cosmetics and grooming products were also important in Roman society and were directly linked to well-being. Although women's freedom and privileges were limited to attending to the needs of their husbands and children, they also played a key role in defining the style of the day through their clothes, make-up and jewellery.

The fashion sense of the Roman Empire was greatly influenced by British, German and Hispanic styles, the first signs of international influences in fashion.

From Rome to the Byzantine Empire and the Middle-Ages (AD~ 450~1500)

The Byzantine Empire, located between Europe and Asia, existed between the 5th and 12th centuries AD. The capital of Byzantine, Constantinople, was considered the richest and largest centre of commerce and fashion of the

period which contributed to its influential role in the development of culture, fashion and history. The era witnessed an even higher level of taste and demand for luxury goods than the Roman Empire.

Emperor Justin I and his wife, Theodora, had a refined taste in luxury goods and can be considered as the precursors of the demand for celebrity-style high fashion goods. They emphasized the important role of clothes and appearance as a mark of distinction. Their enhanced taste for luxury and opulence was displayed through their dress style and the lavish nature of the several ceremonies they organized. Empress Theodora was exceptionally stylish and was the first woman to exploit fashion as a source of power. She had an impeccable style and a penchant for clothes made of the most expensive materials such as brocade and silk and adorned with embroideries made of gold and pearls. Her jewellery was also made by the best craftsmen using the rarest and finest gems.

Unlike during the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Emperor and Empress gave each individual the freedom to choose what to wear. This led to women imitating the dress patterns of Empress Theodora with cheaper materials. Dressing and appearance, however, continued to be used as an indicator of wealth and status. Since women's and men's clothes were made with similar materials such as silk and damask, individual style played an important role in differentiation and this encouraged women to be imaginative. Jewellery was also an important accessory and there are also indications of the use of toiletries for grooming in this era.

The Middle Ages between the 5th and 7th centuries, on the other hand, was not an influential period in the development of fashion. Although the fashion of the early period of this era was somewhat influenced by the Byzantine period, the style adopted was mostly hideous. The jewellery, for example, compared to the Byzantine period was pale. The events of the Middle Ages were focused more on the development of national monarchies and political systems than on fashion and society. Furthermore several conflicts between nations, notably between England and France, also distracted the society. This period witnessed the emergence of universities, the construction of cathedrals and churches and the formation of modern Europe which were viewed as sources of national pride.

As the European empires became more established, the distinctive dress styles of the national monarchies also emerged, leading to the creation of national fashion. Other notable developments of this era include the following:

- 1 England became known for its growing textiles industry.
- 2 The influence of professional tailoring in France soared to such an extent that by 1300, there were 700 active tailors in Paris.
- 3 Luxury materials such as silk were heavily imported from Asia whose textile industry was considered to be more advanced than Europe's.
- 4 The rise of the Italian influence in international fashion became more visible.

Although the fashion industry expanded in this era, the development of fashion style and sophistication remained static. For example, there was no distinction between summer and winter fashion unlike in the Roman Empire. Also men and women wore similar long and floating clothing, covering the whole body, all year round, until the fourteenth century. The social class, however, continued to determine the choice of materials for dressing.

On the other hand, better and meticulous personal hygiene emerged and more attention was paid to personal grooming. Sophisticated toilet and bathroom systems were built and the adoption of the bathing tradition of the Roman era was widespread. Public baths became available in most parts of Europe almost round the clock. The use of cosmetics and make-up also became important especially for women who had a strict code of honour but at the same time were expected to look beautiful for men's admiration. The English invented eye shadow in the 13th century and with it the fad for make-up. The mirror also emerged as an important accessory for both men and women.

National differences and attitudes to beauty and fashion were also visible during this period. For example, the Spanish use of red lipstick, the purple make-up preference of Germans, the adoption of white by the English, and the use of natural colours by Italians were all defined during this period.

The Renaissance, Italy and fashion (15th and 16th centuries)

The explosion of the Renaissance period changed the face of fashion and art forever. This was a period of cultural development in the whole of continental Europe. It was also an era of exchanges, inventions, discovery, communication and travel between the East and the West. The Asian world was discovered by the Portuguese during this period and Christopher Columbus also discovered America in 1492. There were also other discoveries notably in medicine as well as cultural progression.

The Renaissance also witnessed the rise of great Italian artists such as Leonardo Da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli and the birth of literature in Italy, France, Spain and England which influenced society's outlook on the arts and fashion.

Fashion was, therefore, an integral aspect of this era. Clothes and accessories were given an important role in the society as an indicator of social class and knowledge. As a result clothes became an investment. In England even tombstones bore the descriptions of the dressing of the deceased. Other European countries such as Germany and Spain also emerged as important influencers of fashion. For example, between the 16th and 17th centuries, the fashion trend called 'slashing' which featured cutting slits in garments through which linings were pulled, emerged in Germany and was adopted all

over Europe, although it was later banned in France. Other styles like shoulder pads were also invented in this period.

However, the biggest influencers of fashion and culture in this era were the Italians. Italy's re-emergence as a strong force in fashion after the Roman Empire was heightened by the country's riches, particularly in Rome, Florence and Venice. Florence became a major centre of jewellery production and trade in this era. Also, Italy's textile industry which produced the best silk in Europe grew significantly and contributed to the development of the continent's fashion and lifestyle authority. In addition, the Italian government reinvested in fashion and culture using the revenues from textile mills to fund numerous projects.

This Renaissance period also witnessed the emergence of the Grande Aristocratic families who highly influenced fashion and society and can be likened to the celebrities of today. Notable of these are the Italian Gonzague de Montoue and Medici families who lived in splendour and majestic habits to the marvel of the society. The citizens emulated their fashion style and lifestyles in the same manner that the current consumer society follows the lifestyles of celebrities.

All over Europe, luxury and art were being fused and the notion of beauty became an obsession. Women were ready to do anything to be beautiful and their influence in both fashion and society began to develop. The demand for beauty was so high that as early as 1582, a beauty book was written by Jean Liebaut, a Parisian doctor, titled *L'Embellissement et Ornement de Corps Humaine* (The Improvement and Beautification of the Human Body). Also, high-society women had exclusive clubs where new fashion and beauty products were previewed. This can be likened to the current Trunk Shows and Pre-collection Shows organized by luxury brands like Fendi and Burberry.

Seventeenth-century baroque fashion

The Renaissance period was the age of Italian influence, while the Baroque era which existed between 1600 and 1750 was the century of France. This period witnessed the prominence of France and the French lifestyle in Europe and the rest of the world. The high influence was made possible by the King of France, Louis XIV, who is often referred to as, 'Le Roi Soleil' (The Sun King) or 'Louis Le Grand' (Louis the Great). He was an exceptional ruler who reigned for 72 years and had enormous political, economic and cultural strength that enabled him to position France as a major force of global politics, economy, lifestyle and fashion. He portrayed a sophisticated and refined taste, lifestyle and product choices, ranging from fashion, food, art, theatre and literature. The reign of Louis XIV from 1661 marked the return of opulence and exuberance and his tastes in luxury influenced the royal families and aristocrats of the entire continent.

Although the century began with a high influence of the exuberant tastes of the Italians and Spanish fashion evident from the magnificent opera houses and churches built in this period, the French fashion style fully emerged around the middle of the century.

Louis XIV loved fashion and luxury living and consequently supported the fashion industry through government reforms that provided incentives and financial aid to designers, artisans and craftsmen. As far back as 1665, he introduced policies to increase export of French fashion goods and reduce imports of foreign fashion goods. France therefore emerged as the biggest supplier of luxury fashion goods in the world. Louis XIV also ensured that France had a well-established textile industry, which generated wealth and influenced the culture of the nation and beyond.

In addition, French magazines and newspapers distributed all over Europe increased the influence of France in fashion. Paris' Rue Saint Honoré became established as the treasure land for renowned tailors such as Monsieur Regnault and Monsieur Gautier; similar to London's Savile Row of the 1960s and Jermyn Street of today. Talented women couturiers like Madame Villeneuve and Madame Charpentier also emerged and competed with the male tailors. Although the role of women in the general society remained minimal, the emergence of 'Les salons reunions des grands maison privees' (The meeting rooms of the grand private residences) increased the influence of women in lifestyle. Noblemen of the society were known to make secret visits for advice and opinion exchanges.

As lifestyle and education became linked with fashion and sophistication in France, the country became a reference point for stylishness. This gave way to the birth of the French '*Art e Vivre*' and '*Savoir Faire*', especially with inventions like the use of the fork and knife and the formal dance. Consequently, throughout Europe, high society either spoke French or had a French undertone. However, several religious frictions in Europe, mainly between the Protestant north and the Catholic south and the 30-year war between 1618 and 1648 stunted the growth of the French fashion influence for a short time.

The societal structure of the Baroque period also gave way to the detachment of clothing from the social class although this was a gradual process that would take centuries to manifest. Members of the middle social class began dressing similarly to the upper class as a result of increased apparel production no longer restricted to made-to-measure. Clothes also lost their stiffness and more emphasis was placed on comfort, movement and fluidity. The unexpected social liberty also materialized in the design of women's clothes through the emergence of the cleavage and clothes cut close to the body. It also brought about the introduction of the nightgown around 1670 and the skirt in 1680.

Simple, elegant and highly expensive jewellery such as diamonds and pearls were in high demand especially with Paris as a prominent supplier.

Pearls were heavily used by women all over the body to advertise their sophisticated tastes and status. The handbag also emerged as an important accessory preceded by the perfume bag. Perfumes and fragrance were also prominent in this period, especially for men who used it to conceal their bad odour as a result of lack of bathing as they paid less attention to personal grooming.

The eighteenth century, France and luxury fashion

The eighteenth century was a century of contrasts in wealth and status. The prominence of France as the centre of style, civilization, education, intellect, arts and culture continued to rise during this century. By the end of Louis XIV's reign in 1715, the supremacy of France in fashion and lifestyle was unarguable. The rise of France led to the fading of Italy's influence in fashion especially as Italian fashion became less unified and more regional.

Louis XIV established himself as the arbiter of fashion and also propelled the Palace of Versailles, where he lived, as a centre that dictated fashion and lifestyle all over Europe and beyond. The Versailles courts were known for their splendour, opulence and luxury tastes shown through the dress styles and fabrics made of very expensive material. Everyone who wanted to be recognized followed and adopted the style that emanated from Versailles. Versailles Palace fashion led to *haute mode* high-society fashion, which dictated the tastes of society. Dressing emerged as one of the most sensitive aspects of society and fashion became a unifying factor and a source of respect.

Although national styles already existed in this century, the authority of French fashion in defining global tastes was so high that the dress style adopted all over Europe, including the royal courts, was the French style. From Germany to Spain, Portugal, Scandinavia and even Russia, there was a French undertone in fashion, lifestyle and appearance. The influence of the French lifestyle on Germany was so high that under the rule of King Frederick I, a total French taste was mandated in everything from furniture to dressing. Anyone who wanted to be seen as cultivated, well-educated and well-groomed adopted the French taste and style. There was a universal acceptance that only France possessed the secrets of sophistication and charm. Even England, which had a long history of political and colonial rivalry with France and which had a preference for simple clothing, acknowledged the elegance and sophistication of French fashion.

By 1760, French standards of taste, fashion and life known as the *art de vivre* had been universally adopted, characterized by wit, elegance, style, civilized manners and relationships and cultivated tastes in politics, society and intellect. The French language also became the European *lingua franca* of the educated elite, replacing Latin. The French courts, which were main

centres of discussions, were established and became hubs where intelligent people, opinion-seekers and the fashionable were found.

Paris became the centre of fashion and Rue Saint Honoré continued to reign as the Mecca for the supply of textiles to the fashion industry including French silk made in Lyon, which were the most highly priced textiles in the world. Parisian fashion stores were highly reputed for their tantalizing fashion goods notably at Palais Royal. A Russian visitor in awe of the luxury goods found in Paris commented that ‘all the riches of the world are displayed to the astonished eye . . . all the inventions of luxury to the embellished eye’ (Ribeiro, 2002, *Dress in Eighteenth Century Europe*, 52). This status of Paris in luxury fashion was, however, boosted by the high demand for luxury goods especially by Europe’s aristocrats and royal family members.

Fashion in this century continued to grow with the invention of prominent fashion magazines from the 1770s in France, England and Germany. The magazines provided a basis for the emergence of English tailors who first began their craft through adopting the French featured style. They later developed a highly stylish and original English men’s fashion sector. A case in point is the men’s coat, which was the focal point of men’s fashion of the period. Particular attention was paid to the choice of fabric, trimmings, braiding and embroidery lace. Men’s hats were also invented together with hat cocking during this period. The retailing of clothing in London also grew significantly in this century, especially at Covent Garden, the Royal Exchange and Oxford Street.

The eighteenth century also brought about fashion role models or what might be known today as fashion icons or ‘fashionistas’. These women, who were mostly French, wielded high power and influence in European society and were emulated by most Parisians. Since the rest of the world copied Parisian women, everyone in the world indirectly copied these fashion role models. Notable among them was Madame Pompadour who promoted elegance and classic style and Marie-Antoinette who was the fashion icon of the day. They changed clothes and accessories frequently and caused several women to almost go bankrupt in the process of imitating their style. The influence of Marie-Antoinette was so high that when she became pregnant, women wore skirts stuffed with pillows to mimic the look of pregnancy.

One of the first prominent fashion merchants and designers, Rose Bertin, also emerged in this century. Born in 1747, she rose to prominence as the couturier and supplier of the best fashion to the aristocrats and royal family members of France and beyond. She is perhaps the first luxury fashion designer to own shops beyond her country’s shores, with the opening of her London store in the 1780s. At the height of her fame, even royal family members felt honoured to be on her client list including the Grand Duchess of Russia who travelled to Paris to purchase her dresses. Although her fame in Paris diminished during the years of the revolution, her London store sustained her business until its eventual closure.

While the high influence of France in dictating fashion and lifestyle continued well into the next century, the political disturbances the country faced during and after the French revolution years (1788–90) had an impact on both French fashion and the world. However, France was yet again to restore its fashion leadership position in the following centuries, and further reinforce the position of Paris as the undisputable fashion capital of the world.

The nineteenth century and modern luxury fashion

The nineteenth century marked the beginning of the modern luxury goods sector and the launch of many of the highly valuable luxury brands that we know today. The rapid development of the fashion industry during this period was made possible by the bolstering of social and economic conditions and rising prosperity. The demand for luxury goods remained high and extremely talented and entrepreneurial designers emerged and grasped business opportunities made possible by their predecessors.

In following with the tradition of the previous historical periods, outward appearance remained an indicator of wealth and social status. In addition, fashion became more than a vocation for knowledgeable people, and was recognized as an important contributor of economic growth. The French and most of continental Europe saw fashion as an intricate part of their societies and a necessary subject of discussion alongside literature, arts and history among intellectuals. The French government reinforced its support for the textile and fashion sectors through creating incentives and favourable policies. In England, however, fashion and luxury were perceived as frivolous and irrelevant subjects, especially among scholars.

By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the fashion industry in Paris had become an established world leader and was mainly segmented into two parts: dressmaking which was mostly controlled by highly influential women, and textile merchandizing and professional tailoring which was mostly controlled by men.

The buoyancy of this period gave rise to the launch of some of the luxury brands still in existence, including Guerlain by Pierre-François Pascal Guerlain in 1828 and Cartier by Louis-François Cartier in 1847, both in Paris. Also a young and gifted Louis Vuitton created the Louis Vuitton brand in 1854 as a leather luggage goods company in Paris while in Hampshire, England, 21-year-old Thomas Burberry founded the Burberry brand in 1856.

One man, however, was to change the face of luxury fashion and its marketing and management style forever. He was the Englishman, Charles Frederick Worth, who invented *haute couture* in Paris in 1858. During this period, when dressmaking was the sole domain of women, he became the first prominent male couturier and the private designer of the wife of Napoleon, Empress Eugenie, and other high-society women. His talent didn't rest solely in the

design and construction of garments, he was also a marketing genius. He changed the way fashion was retailed by introducing models and the ‘*defilé*’ (private fashion shows), and publicizing his creations through the ‘celebrities’ and influential women of the day. He also cut the production time of dress-making by more than 50 per cent, taking only one fitting to make a dress instead of the usual six fittings. His fashion empire was so successful and vast that at the peak of his career he employed more than 1,000 seamstresses.

The rapid development and transformation of the fashion environment was boosted by Europe’s fast industrialization and improvement of manufacturing techniques. As a result the following important changes took place and became visible towards the end of the century:

- 1 Fashion, both for men and women became simple, understated, unadorned and classic as a result of the mind progressiveness of the people.
- 2 The simple and functional English fashion style for women emerged as a complement to the French elaborate and elegant style. Men were also influenced by the English country style.
- 3 The French revolution acted as a catalyst for the move towards the adoption of simplicity and more democracy in fashion as a sign of modernity, especially in the 1780s.
- 4 The rise of the Victorian era from the 1820s to the middle of the century also heralded the commencement of ready-to-wear as sewing machines were introduced to everyday women.

At the same time, America, the New World, was on the rise in both economic and cultural influence. Although Americans widely adopted fashion from Europe, their own tastes began to emerge especially during and after the French revolution years, which led to less imports of French fashion into America. Fashion for the masses also developed rapidly in America during this period, especially after the emergence of the cowboys and their dress style towards the end of the century. At the same time Americans embraced jeans, introduced in 1850 by Levi Strauss, a Bulgarian immigrant. Although jeans were originally a coverall made for California gold-rush miners from sturdy tent material and were made popular a century later in the 1960s, their foundation was laid during this period. The casual dressing of Native American Indian women also influenced the fashion simplicity of this period. Thus by the late 1800s a new kind of fashion freedom had been ushered in, both in Europe and in America.

The rise of the yankees

The nineteenth century was the beginning of America’s influence in global fashion. This was propelled by extensive industrial and economic growth as

well as growing levels of literacy. Increased opportunities in different sectors, notably in New York, also contributed to American fashion progress. Although most of the fashion products retailed in New York at this time were imported from France and the rest of Europe, American fashion consumers developed sophisticated tastes from extensive travels and cultural influence. The introduction of fashion magazines such as Godey's *Lady's Book* in 1837 also significantly influenced the fashion development of America.

Additional influencing factors of fashion growth include the expansion of the American middle class and their increased wealth. Also, the invention of the sewing machine and the creation of paper dress patterns established a means of copying the styles of Parisian and London women. In addition, other machines that could create patterns, covered buttons and embroidery were invented and adopted by dressmakers, contributing to the rise of the ready-to-wear market. Further progress was made in mass production techniques making ready-to-wear goods widely adopted in New York between the 1860s and 1890s. The fashion public also embraced ready-to-wear fashion as a result of the simplicity of the American lifestyle, which was different from the prevalent European aristocratic opulence. However, European imports remained perceived as more superior and sought after throughout the century.

All through the nineteenth century, the American fashion public, however, continued to favour the French style. As a result, wealthy members of society imported their fashion goods from France while the rest of the population relied on New York to produce 'copies' of the French style. This factor also contributed to the rise of New York as the centre of business and fashion for those who could not travel to Paris. By the middle of the nineteenth century, New York stores like A.T. Stewart, founded around 1875, offered custom-made clothes and fitted ready-to-wear replicas of French fashion.

Several fashion retail innovations were also developed in America during the nineteenth century. Notable among these are the concept of 'Opening Days', which were special days when the designs of the next fashion season were shown. This can be likened to today's pre-collection shows. Another retail innovation of this period was the introduction of the decorative window display at retail stores, which remains a prevalent aspect of luxury fashion retailing.

The American fashion advancement of the nineteenth century also extended to the emergence of other luxury fashion departmental stores in New York, that continue to exist today. Notable among them are Lord & Taylor, which began in 1852; R.H. Macy, currently known as Macy's, which started in 1878; and Brooks Brothers and Hearn. The fashion retail industry and competitive levels in New York grew rapidly during this century. The concept of retail 'cathedrals' also materialized during this period with the introduction of A.T. Stewart's elaborately decorated \$3 million New York store in 1862, which occupied five storeys and two basements. The store also

had continuous organ music and its clients included the first lady at the time, Mary Todd Lincoln.

By the end of this decade, America's prestigious retail locations like New York's Fifth Avenue could be compared with Paris' Rue de la Paix and Rue Saint Honoré and London's Regent Street. The American luxury departmental stores retailed both imported and homemade fashion goods. The stores also contributed to the growth in acceptance of indigenous American dress-makers, milliners and fashion designers. Although this century did not produce an American designer who attained international recognition, it paved the way for the success of the designers of the next century. By the end of the nineteenth century, the American fashion scene had evolved to a level of international standing.

The twentieth-century fashion explosion

The expeditious growth of industrialization and trade at the beginning of the twentieth century relegated fashion to the background. In the first half of the century, fashion was generally perceived as frivolous and a non-crucial aspect of economic development. This notion was changed through the influence of France and later Italy in elevating fashion and putting it on the same par as other forms of art like literature and theatre. It is no surprise then that the foundation of modern luxury fashion was laid in France, notably in Paris, which is still considered as a city of style and the fashion capital of the world.

Throughout the twentieth century, fashion relentlessly evolved and influenced society and several luxury fashion designers whose brands remain in existence emerged during this period. The fashion product categories were also expanded to include accessories and cosmetics, encouraged by the craving for fashion change as a result of the end of the Victorian era with the death of Queen Victoria of England in 1901.

During the early part of the twentieth century, Charles Worth, the inventor of *haute couture*, remained the supreme fashion force and the most respected couturier in the world. However, the rapid development of the luxury fashion market and the rise of other talented designers led to fierce competition. A notable competitor was Gabrielle Coco Chanel who launched her business as a hat-maker for the French aristocracy in 1910 in Paris. Chanel quickly created a niche market for her business, which led to its rapid expansion. Other designers that posed as competitors to Worth were Jeanne Lanvin who started her couture house in 1889; Paul Poiret who opened his in 1904; Madeline Vionnet who launched her design house in 1912; and Elsa Schiaparelli who started in 1927.

The early twentieth century also witnessed an explosive growth of the beauty and cosmetics sector. After the World Fair held in Paris in 1900, François Coty launched his cosmetics company in Paris, known today as

Coty Inc. Elizabeth Arden opened a decade later in America in 1910. They both pioneered the modern make-up and cosmetics industry. One year later, in 1911, Paul Poiret launched the first branded perfume, Rosine, which marked the birth of the luxury fragrance sector. Other designers, like Chanel, followed with the launching of Chanel No. 5 perfume in 1922 and the 'La Maison Worth' branded perfume in 1925. Jean Patou also introduced his branded fragrance in this period and extended the fragrance experience by establishing the innovative presentation of scents like cocktails to be mixed and tested like drinks.

The First World War, however, dominated the 1910s and influenced society's attitudes towards luxury and fashion. By the end of the war, the tastes of women in fashion had changed dramatically as a result of the increased responsibilities and hardship they underwent during the war. Although women continued to desire luxury fashion goods, they sought simplicity rather than the pre-war extravagance. Coco Chanel was one of the few designers who understood this significant consumer change and responded by designing highly sought-after clothes including the classic black dress. The post-war era also ushered in Popular Youth Culture to replace the sorrow of the war years. This was the forerunner period of the fashion revival that would take place shortly in the 1960s through pop culture.

After the war, the cinema became the most established entertainment medium and gradually personalities from the world of film replaced aristocrats as fashion icons and influencers. The popularity of Hollywood film stars like Greta Garbo and Marlene Dietrich and their fashion style greatly influenced the development of fashion in the 1920s and 1930s. In Paris, Josephine Baker also became a fashion icon and the most influential and highest paid entertainer in Europe.

Coco Chanel, Jeanne Lanvin and Madeleine Vionnet rose to high prominence during this era. On the other hand, the fashion businesses of Charles Worth and Paul Poiret slowly fizzled out, ushering in a new era of designers who showed a better understanding of the fashion environment.

At the same time, in Italy, fashion was re-emerging as a prominent social feature and created a favourable environment for the launch of Prada by Mario Prada in 1913 and Gucci in 1921 by Guccio Gucci. In America, however, fashion also developed within retailing and distribution through departmental stores rather than Parisian style boutiques. This evolution made fashion more visible and accessible to the growing American middle class. The concept would later pave the way for the successful retailing of ready-to-wear fashion which began in New York.

During the early twentieth century, society's wealthy also dominated and influenced luxury fashion in a similar manner to the royalties of the previous eras. The strict social class system that characterized societal structure provided the major fashion designers with a clientele comprising royal family members in Europe and the world's wealthy. The products

of accessories designers like leather goods and luggage designer Louis Vuitton were in high demand by aristocrats in Europe and beyond. Guccio Gucci was also highly successful in this period as a result of developing a clientele consisting of Europe's royals and international stars that later included Princess Grace Kelly of Monaco and US first lady Jackie Kennedy.

During the 1940s and 1950s, the Second World War changed the outlook of fashion once again. The war brought shortages in almost every category of goods including fashion. At the same time, fashion tastes were enhanced through the cinema, which provided a form of distraction from the war. This led to the increase of the style and fashion influences of Hollywood actresses like Marilyn Monroe, Liz Taylor, Audrey Hepburn and Brigitte Bardot.

It was also during this period that Christian Dior emerged as a major fashion designer. Dior was a highly talented *haute couturier* and the expertise and precision he applied to his designs quickly gained him high popularity. With general society being more influenced by the cinema, designers like Dior were sought to construe the fashion styles of the movies. Other designers such as Hubert de Givenchy, Pierre Cardin and Cristobal Balenciaga also gained world renown during this period.

The twentieth century was the century that established the modern luxury fashion industry. Several luxury brands that continue to exist today such as Cartier, Burberry, Louis Vuitton, Chanel and Prada were created between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These brands have not only survived for more than a century, but have also maintained their core tradition and heritage while adapting to the constantly changing fashion and business scenario. Although most of them have diversified their product and services offerings, they have all remained true to their historical values.

The founders of the early luxury brands also recognized the importance of several business concepts like trademarks and global branding, long before branding became a core business aspect. For example, the French brand Cartier opened its first international store in London as early as 1902 and its first American store in New York in 1909. Thomas Burberry also had the foresight to register his brand logo as a trademark in 1900 prior to his international expansion. Louis Vuitton created the famous LV logo as far back as 1896 and the GG logo was developed by Gucci in the 1960s. The creators of the historical luxury brands were considered the geniuses of their day. However, the designers and business managers currently overseeing the activities of these brands are the true innovators of modern luxury fashion.

The sixties

The success of designers like Christian Dior, Pierre Cardin and Hubert de Givenchy in the 1940s and 1950s paved the way for other young designers in the 1960s. Yves Saint Laurent who worked for Dior opened his design house

in 1962 and his first boutique in 1966. Other notable designers that were influential in this decade are Emilio Pucci, Paco Rabanne, Mary Quant, Milo Schoen, Nina Ricci, Valentino and Franco Moschino. Each of these designers contributed a form of innovation to fashion development. For example, Yves Saint Laurent was one of the first designers to create a complete collection per season, and Emilio Pucci introduced the use of the print in luxury apparel. The 1960s also witnessed a rapid growth of the Italian influence in fashion and the expansion of the accessories market, including the Italian invention of the stiletto.

The social temperance of the 1960s highly favoured fashion. Society gravitated towards women's liberation and fashion became one of the most visible ways of portraying the new woman. The designs of Chanel, Yves Saint Laurent and Christian Dior all embodied the new woman's freedom. Women's independence also extended to the adoption of fashion as a trendy vocation, leading to the emergence of several fashion schools in Europe and America.

The 1960s was also the first decade of the popular and youth culture movements. People became non-conformist to fashion dictations and began to express their individual attitudes and mood through their clothing and accessories. British designer Mary Quant played a key role in this social order through her unconventional approach to fashion. Her eccentric style, introduced at a time when the fashion society craved a revolution, contributed to her success. The pop culture of the 1960s would later lead to other fashion culture spin-offs such as the punk culture of the 1980s.

Towards the end of the 1960s, designers also became bolder and more experimental, using materials such as metal, plastic and wires to design clothes. These generated great press coverage and became a tool for the later utilization of *haute couture* for publicity rather than for commercial gains.

This decade of great fashion moments also ushered in the era of the 'Designers as Celebrity', which is still prevalent. However, fashion designers were not the only popular group. Other celebrities especially Hollywood stars and international icons, notably America's first lady Jackie Kennedy, also contributed to the growth of fashion in the 1960s.

The seventies

The 1970s was the decade of the growth and prosperity of fashion manufacturers, notably the American ready-to-wear mass producers. The advancement in manufacturing technology and expertise led to rapid design and product turnover and increased ready-to-wear exports all over the world. Mass production also began to threaten the fashion leadership position of Paris for the first time. This was amplified by the decline of the demand for *haute couture*, which had its domain in Paris. However, the lack of a single city in

dictating mass fashion trends ensured that Paris retained its fashion leadership position. Another aspect of fashion affected by mass production was boutique fashion retail, which became less favoured than departmental store fashion retail.

The interaction of fashion and music was an additional prevalent feature throughout the 1970s. Musicians replaced the Hollywood stars of the previous decade as fashion symbols. Rock bands such as the Rolling Stones and stars like Mick Jagger became fashion icons. They injected a nonconformist mood into society through their jet-set lifestyles. This attitude was aptly translated in fashion through the casual and individual look that was prevalent throughout this decade.

This music cultural influence on fashion was heightened by other changes in society. Significant among these is the disappearance of the social class system, which predominated fashion in the previous periods. The seventies also boosted the wealth accumulation of the former middle class and enhanced fashion independence, personal tastes and styles. Other factors such as the increase in international travel and cultural exchanges also became a source of inspiration for expressing fashion taste and style.

The 1970s also marked the beginning of the gradual disappearance of *haute couture*. Women became less interested in fashion fittings and consultations because fashion had become accessible and was being adopted as a lifestyle. The state of 1970s fashion also contributed to the success of Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein who launched their businesses in 1967 and 1968 respectively but gained prominence in the 1970s. Their major consumers, who were Americans, demanded simplicity in fashion designs, and this inclination towards simplicity in fashion also spread to other cities including Paris and London. French designers like Yves Saint Laurent, who was known to express anti-status in his designs, embraced the American understated fashion style. He also adopted denim material, breaking from the convention of using expensive and luxurious material for luxury goods. This cemented the way for the current use of denim by other brands like Christian Dior and Louis Vuitton. British brand Mulberry, which was established in 1971, also became immediately successful as a result of its simple and contemporary style favoured by the fashion society of the seventies.

The eighties

The casual fashion attitude of the seventies created a backdrop for a mature modern fashion environment and numerous fashion evolutions in the 1980s. Several successful fashion designers like the Americans Donna Karan and Tommy Hilfiger and the Japanese Yoji Yamamoto, Issey Miyake and Kenzo Takada gained global prominence during this decade. At the same time, the casual style of Ralph Lauren became widely appealing in America. The rest

of the world interpreted this look through the wide adoption of denim and jeans trousers. German designer Karl Lagerfeld also launched his fashion house in 1984, around the concept of a brave anti-status style and in line with the fashion society's demand for unfussiness.

The 1980s was also the decade that saw a major change in the global perception of beauty, with the rising status of highly paid black models like Iman, Naomi Campbell and Beverley Johnson. The ascent of fashion models also led the way to the advent of supermodels as celebrities. The promotion of supermodels was pioneered by Gianni Versace, who also enhanced the use of colours and prints in fashion design through his Miami Beach inspired collections. The stimulation of fashion through multiple sources also extended to ethnic influences from Africa, India, China and the Mexican peasant looks. At the same time, Britain's Princess Diana injected a much needed fresh style into the British fashion scene. The impacts of these influences were felt on a global level, with the increase in international travel and communications.

The 1980s was also the decade of Punk Culture and a radical fashion revolution, pioneered by designer Zandra Rhodes. It featured a rebellious attitude towards fashion that was prevalent throughout the decade. This culture was also propelled by musicians like Madonna and music groups and rock bands like the Sex Pistols.

The decade's revolutions also encouraged the association of fashion with modern art. In 1983, Yves Saint Laurent became the first living designer to have his clothes presented in the Metropolitan Museum of Modern Art in New York, to honour his 20 years of fashion contribution. Exhibitions featuring other talented designers have also been held in several museums in different cities.

Several major changes in luxury fashion management also took place in the 1980s. They include multiple mergers, acquisitions and alliances among companies, propelled by global business sophistication. These processes revealed the importance of the concept of branding as an intangible asset for companies. It also led several luxury brands to take steps to strengthen their brand assets. Examples of these steps include the appointment of Karl Lagerfeld (who was at Chloé for 20 years) by Chanel in 1983, to revive the iconic French brand.

However, the most notable fashion business phenomenon of the 1980s was the assumption of Bernard Arnault as the President of LVMH (Louis Vuitton Mœt Hennessey) in 1989. Arnault would later turn LVMH into the world's largest luxury goods conglomerate and launch a new era of strategic management in the modern luxury fashion sector. His later assemblage of a portfolio of luxury brands would also spark attempts at consolidations in the luxury goods sector, leading to the creation of rival luxury conglomerates such as PPR (Pinault, Printemps, Redoute), which owns the Gucci Group; Richemont, which owns Cartier and Chloé among others; and the Prada Group, which owns Prada and Miu Miu among others.

The nineties

The 1990s was a decade of explosive global consumption of modern luxury fashion goods, spearheaded by the vast expenditure of Japanese and Middle Eastern consumers on luxury goods. As a result, the majority of the existing luxury brands launched international market operations, notably in Japan. Luxury brands also expanded their product portfolios and placed increased emphasis on accessories like leather goods and jewellery, in response to consumer demand.

The decade also witnessed rapid developments in the competitive structure of the luxury goods industry, which led to the adoption of advanced fashion management practices. The most noteworthy of these developments is the reinforcement of the luxury brand's equity as an intangible asset generator for luxury companies. This recognition of the important role of the 'branding' factor in the performance of luxury companies led to the revival of staid brands like British brands Burberry and Mulberry and the rise of other brands like the Italian brand Roberto Cavalli.

Also, for the first time in centuries, Britain, which is considered the global centre of business services rather than fashion, began to take fashion seriously with the recognition of the huge corporate potential of the luxury goods sector. Efforts in this regard include the establishment of The British Fashion Council in 1991, to protect and support the interests of the British fashion sector and to discourage talented British designers from leaving the country. British fashion schools like Central St Martin's College of Art and Design, London, were also highly promoted as a centre of learning and fashion excellence.

An additional change in the luxury competitive environment was the gradual lowering of the high entry barrier of the luxury goods sector. This was made possible partly as a result of the interest of external non-luxury companies in funding new brands and acquiring old ones. Consequently, brands like Ozwald Boateng, Alexander McQueen and Jimmy Choo were launched in 1990, 1992 and 1996, respectively. They also paved the way for the 2001 launch of the Stella McCartney brand.

The management methods of luxury fashion brands was also highly affected by the rapid growth and influence of LVMH, the first luxury goods conglomerate with a portfolio of more than 50 brands including Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior, among several others. LVMH's success led to the emergence of a new luxury goods sub-sector and other conglomerates and corporate brands like the Gucci Group, Richemont and the Prada Group.

In response to growing competition, luxury brands also focused on product retailing by adopting the strategy of colossal 'cathedral-type' retail stores, with great emphasis on architectural design. Several innovations were also made in selling strategies in addition to store design and atmosphere as tools for representing the brand image. These include the use of advanced

information technology in inventory management and control and in tracking product stock and delivery. Technology also provided a new channel of retail and distribution through the Internet. However, the dotcom crash of the late 1990s highlighted by the failure of the first fashion e-retail start-up company, boo.com, discouraged the adoption of Internet retailing during this decade. The Internet, however, affected other aspects of fashion such as the influence of celebrities like Sharon Stone and Elizabeth Hurley on a global level.

The 1990s was also the decade that launched the luxury services sub-sector in response to the increasing business needs of luxury brands. The company that pioneered this sector was Atlantic Publishing Ltd London, owned by James Ogilvy, which publishes the pioneer luxury industry journal, *Luxury Briefing*. The journal was launched as a response to the market size expansion and competitive structure changes which called for specialized market information and analysis.

Another significant fashion market change of the 1990s was in the mass fashion division but with a direct impact on the luxury fashion sector. The mass fashion sector grew rapidly as a result of advanced manufacturing, designing and retailing techniques. Brands like Zara from Spain, H&M from Sweden and Top Shop from Britain began to produce catwalk-style fashion at low cost, offering consumers luxury fashion alternatives at significantly lower prices. Their fashion goods were instantly embraced by global fashion consumers, leading to swift success. Their presence in the fashion market also led to a dramatic change in luxury fashion consumption attitudes, as had never been witnessed in the history of fashion. These changes have been more prevalent in the noughties.

The noughties

The luxury fashion terrain has undergone significant developments so far in the noughties. The decade was ushered in with the negative impact of the dotcom crash of the late 1990s and early 2000s, which led luxury brands to develop an aversion to e-commerce at the beginning of the decade. LVMH, however, changed this stance with the launching of an e-retail company, eluxury.com, which sold products from its brands, Louis Vuitton, Christian Dior, Donna Karan and several other internal and external brands in the US market. The unexpected success of eluxury.com led to the 2005 launch of e-retail operations in France and the United Kingdom for LVMH brands like Louis Vuitton and Christian Dior. Eluxury.com also spurred competitor luxury brands like Gucci, Hermès and Giorgio Armani to adopt e-retail. However, there remains a continuous debate among several luxury brands over the adoption of e-retail. The main concern of the luxury brands that are reluctant to adopt e-retail such as Chanel, is the dilution of the 'exclusive' and 'prestige' attributes of their brands, on the Internet. The advancement of e-retail

strategies, which includes tactics for enhancing a brand's image and replicating a prestigious atmosphere online, however, invalidates this viewpoint.

An additional development in the luxury fashion sector since the beginning of this decade is the adoption of several non-standard strategies in product development, branding and retailing. These strategies include product extension in traditionally non-luxury goods divisions like furniture, restaurants and hotels; co-branding exercises with both luxury and non-luxury brands; and product discounting and retail outlet shopping villages. These strategies arose as a result of the current rife competition among luxury brands and the changing needs of luxury consumers.

The most visible and dramatic change of the decade has, however, been with the luxury consumer. The consumer landscape has undergone such a sweeping transformation that the existence of a typical 'luxury consumer' has been brought into question. Consumers that currently purchase luxury goods are now well-informed, individualistic, demanding and above all no longer loyal to a single brand. The change in consumers was brought about by several factors like the Internet, globalization, the advent of mass luxury, immigration, global wealth creation opportunities, the prominence of mass fashion brands, the emergence of new markets, the influence of digital television and the extension of luxury to lifestyle brands. As I write, several luxury brands are currently in the process of understanding who their consumers currently are and how to satisfy their needs.

The noughties has so far also been the decade of celebrity worship. Celebrities have greatly influenced consumers in this decade. International stars like Madonna, Beyoncé and Sara Jessica Parker have become more influential role models for consumers than political figures like Tony Blair and George Bush. This phenomenon has been prodded once again by advanced information and communications technology, including the Internet and Digital television. Global cult television shows like *Sex & The City* and movies like *The Devil Wears Prada*, which have fashion undertones, have become reference points for fashion consumers. Also several Reality Television shows in different parts of the world have encouraged the elevation of the celebrity status and the desire of consumers to become stars themselves. The implication is that luxury consumers crave personal attention through products and services, from luxury brands and expect to be treated as stars. As a result, there has been a wide adoption of the celebrity endorsement strategy in luxury goods advertising and communications. Luxury brands, however, have yet to adopt personalized services as a core aspect of their offerings, to satisfy the desire that consumers have to be treated as stars themselves.

The mass fashion brands like Zara, H&M and Top Shop have also risen in eminence and influence this decade. They have devised effective strategies that enable them to compete with luxury brands for the same consumers. These mass brands have spurred fashion phenomena like fast fashion, throwaway

fashion and the democratization of luxury presented extensively in Chapter 7. They have also contributed significantly to the attitude change of luxury consumers who have also become their own stylists.

The market environment of the noughties has also steered towards unprecedented development in the globalization of luxury brands. This has been spurred by the continuous influence of the Internet and the emergence of new markets like China, Russia and India. Consequently, several luxury brands have launched rapid global expansion plans and many luxury brands now have more stores in some particular foreign countries than in their home countries. For example, American brand Coach has more than 100 stores in Japan alone. Other brands like Louis Vuitton and Giorgio Armani have launched aggressive expansions plans in several new markets.

On the level of market competition, the noughties has also seen great advancement in the concept of branding strategy as a core business aspect. The development has been most visible in the process of creating and managing the brand value as a company's asset. Great emphasis has been placed on the financial returns that a company accrues through its brand's asset. As a result, several luxury brands have made brand management central to their corporate strategies. In other words, every strategy adopted is measured against its role in the protection of the brand. The prominence of the intangible brand asset was highlighted through the annual Global Brands Scoreboard, conducted by brand consultancy company Interbrand and published by *Businessweek* magazine. The luxury brands that have featured in the scoreboard include Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Chanel and Hermès, among others.

An additional noteworthy emerging occurrence of the noughties is the advancement of several British luxury brands and fashion designers. While the 1990s ushered in an era of luxury fashion branding adoption in Britain, the noughties has been a decade of visible success for the British luxury brands like Jimmy Choo, Burberry, Mulberry, Oswald Boateng, Stella McCartney, Alexander McQueen, Matthew Williamson, John Galliano and Alice Temperley, among others.

Finally, the noughties has also witnessed growth in the luxury services sub-sector. In addition to *Luxury Briefing* journal, which was launched in 1996, several companies that cater to the needs of luxury companies and luxury consumers alike have emerged. These include companies specializing in trend tracking, consumer insights, style reporting, exclusive clubs and private concierge services and product loaning, exchanges and auctioning.

2007 and beyond

The rest of the noughties and the following decades will feature symbolic developments in the luxury goods sector. Information and communications

technology will become more extensively adopted by innovative brands, which will be extended beyond the Internet and e-retail to include Mobile Shopping and possibly iPod Shopping. There will also be advancement in sophisticated consumer behaviour tracking techniques such as Neuro-marketing science, which utilizes the measurement of the reaction of brain waves to track consumer response to marketing messages.

Consumers will also continue to be more demanding and assertive. They will become more mature in their attitudes towards luxury, and satisfying them will become more challenging. Their expectations from luxury brands will include substance in addition to quality as a measurement of value. These will be manifested in intangible qualities that are related to ethics and moral consciousness. As a result, luxury brands will be expected to show more socially responsible practices. Consumers will expect to have wholesome experiences with every interaction with luxury brands. They will also expect personal attention and the option of customized products and services.

The luxury consumer market will expand significantly and the influence of new markets such as China, India and Russia will form the core direction of several luxury brands. In addition, mass immigration in several parts of the world will bring an exotic change to the luxury goods scene. At the same time, consumers in the mature European luxury market and the growing American and Japanese markets will have a different set of expectations. Luxury brands will therefore be required to manage the cyclical position of their consumers in different global regions.

The market environment will also evolve with additional new luxury brands entering the market and mass fashion brands encroaching into the luxury sphere. Other strategies like globalization and consolidation will also prevail. These will intensify competition among luxury brands and reinforce the importance of carving a clear brand positioning strategy in the market. Innovative brands will thrive, while brands with unclear messages will fizzle out.

Finally, the luxury services sub-sector will become a well-defined industry that caters to the needs of luxury brands and consumers. These services will include Brand Valuation, Luxury Intelligence, Market Research, Consumer Research, Trend Tracking, Style News and Advisory, Lifestyle Branding and Luxury Goods Exchanges. Most importantly, more books like this will be written!

The dolce vita style blast

Italy like France is a country known for fashion creativity and expertise. It has been a major fashion force for centuries, from the period of the Roman Empire until today. Italian fashion know-how and production expertise is widely accepted as the best in the world. Brands like Gucci, Prada, Salvatore Ferragamo and Bvlgari have contributed significantly to establishing an

important position for Italy in the world of fashion. However, unlike France, which views fashion as a form of art, Italy's outlook on fashion is more as a traditional business developed through a lifetime and passed through generations. In France, fashion and creativity is an obsession and a soubriquet of expression embedded in the genes. In Italy, fashion is both a lifestyle and a means to a lifestyle and culture.

Italy had a prominent position in global fashion during the Roman Empire and the Renaissance era. However, this diminished after the fall of the Venetian Empire in 1797 and the subsequent political unsettlement, giving way for the rise of France and later England in fashion. As a result, several talented Italian designers left their country in search of fortune in France and later in America. By the eighteenth century, Italian women like the rest of the Europeans had begun to adopt French fashion while Italian men adopted English tailoring, further demoting Italian fashion. Consequently by the early nineteenth century, Italian fashion had almost disappeared and had been nearly completely replaced by French *haute couture*. It took almost a century before Italian fashion was to become world-renowned once more.

The brands that launched the Italian fashion revolution on Italian soil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are Prada, Ermenegildo Zegna, Gucci and Salvatore Ferragamo, while Giorgio Armani, Gianni Versace and Dolce & Gabbana carried it forward. The first internationally recognized Italian designer was, however, Elsa Schiaparelli (1890–1973) who became famous after opening her couture house in Paris. Later, in 1906, Guccio Gucci started his saddlery shop in Florence and expanded to fashion accessories in 1923. Ermenegildo Zegna followed Gucci's launch in 1912, with menswear fabrics in the small village of Trivero. Salvatore Ferragamo launched his business in 1927. He was born in Italy in 1898 and emigrated to the USA in 1914 where he studied shoe design and started a flourishing business in California before returning to Italy to set up a workshop in Florence.

The fashion businesses of these talented Italian designers quickly gained world fame. Italian accessories, especially shoes, became popular and synonymous with style, class and high quality all over the world. Although Italian accessories flourished, fashion remained predominated by the dress and this was mostly made in France. As a result, Italian designers focused their attention on exports to America, rather than on developing a home fashion sector. As early as the 1920s, Americans were getting exposed to Italian fashion and its appealing associations to European aristocracy. Italy was also an attractive tourist destination for Americans with its beautiful landscape and seductive lifestyle. This combination served as an important formula for the success of Italian fashion abroad.

The Italian government also recognized the important role of fashion in resuscitating its economy and engineered reforms to favour the growth of fashion. For example, Italian leader Benito Mussolini's government established a National Fashion Office in Turin to promote the Italian fashion industry. However, the

fashion influence of Italy was not to rise to its Renaissance-era glory until the mid-1940s, although the country maintained its rich art and cultural heritage.

Before 1945, Italy's economic mainstay was primarily agriculture-based and this was a challenge to the country's economy. The adverse effects of the Second World War further worsened the economy, and as a result the industrial production of fashion goods and innovation in couture and dressmaking remained minimal. The climate of a thriving social and economic structure which fashion needs in order to flourish was lacking. While Paris boomed as the world's fashion destination, Italian cities like Rome, Florence and Milan remained largely unappealing.

An additional factor that contributed to the slow growth of Italian fashion influence is that Italy had no constant and representative fashion capital city like Paris in France and London in Britain. Although Florence, Rome and Milan were (and still remain) important fashion centres, each region of Italy has always specialized in a specific type of fashion production. Florence has long been associated with woollen clothing; Sicily was the centre of artistic weaving while Lucca and Venice were known for silk textile and Venice the centre of shoemakers and cobblers, leatherworks, silk and cotton weavers, wool spinners and dyers.

One major contributing factor to the growth of Italian fashion was the Nazi occupation of Paris during the Second World War which disrupted the leading position of French fashion. During this period, America was again to play an important role in the take-off of Italian fashion. The post-war mass migration from Italy to America meant an export of Italian fashion style and culture and later an import of American ready-to-wear business and technology back to Italy. The peculiar family-orientation nature of the Italian fashion industry meant that every skill and technology learnt was passed from generation to generation. The effective blending of this family-oriented Italian craftsmanship with America's commercial orientation towards fashion would later serve as a backdrop for the success of several brands including Versace and Tod's.

Although Gucci and Ferragamo were the forerunners of Italian fashion, the Italian look as we know it today was pioneered by Giorgio Armani and Gianni Versace in the 1970s. Their ease of style and elegance was the opposite of the French opulence and greatly appealed to fashion consumers worldwide. They also highlighted the important complementary role of accessories like shoes, jewellery and sunglasses. The rapidly rising Italian designers effectively drew on the fame of their heritage of precision and craftsmanship and the renown of their accessories. Americans completely embraced this style while the French admired and respected it. The fashion world had changed and Italy contributed to the way the new world looked.

Italy flourishes today as a country of not only beauty but of immense fashion style and influence. The majority of the world's most valuable luxury fashion brands are from Italy and numerous other Italian fashion brands continue to gain fashion authority globally. Although the Italian fashion model is different

from the rest of the world in terms of its family business orientation, the majority of Italian brands have shown apt flexibility in adopting modern business practices in fashion management. Italy has always had the typecast of fashion manufacturing, while France was known for fashion branding and Britain for fashion retailing. However, in the current fashion environment, these stereotypes are no longer applicable as each of these countries, especially Italy, has shown the ability for appropriate adaptation to the fashion market's needs.

America, fashion and commerce

The mention of Italian, English or French fashion immediately conjures up an image of a particular style in the mind. When 'American fashion' is referred to, however, people usually become confused. This is because unlike European fashion, which had an early evolution and definition, the American fashion style was unclear and difficult to describe during its evolution between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The perception of American fashion has ranged from the casual look comprising of t-shirt, denim and sneakers, to the hip-hop style that adds bold and flashy jewellery to casual wear, and to the California-style shirt and beach shorts. A lot of people in other parts of the world would use the term 'sportswear' to describe American fashion. Others will make references to the collared t-shirt made popular by Ralph Lauren as the American fashion style while yet others will just assume that American fashion comprises of cheaper spin-offs of the fashion styles produced in Europe. The reality is that Americans have known and shown good fashion taste and creativity through a consistent fashion progression spanning centuries.

In the early part of the twentieth century, America depended on Europe, particularly on Paris, for its fashion products and style guidelines. Wealthy Americans made several annual trips across the Atlantic to Paris for dress fittings at notable couturiers such as La Maison Worth. This fashionable elite also purchased their accessories in Italy, especially in Florence. Back home, those that could not travel to Europe copied the styles of the wealthy. This trend continued until the Second World War and the result was a great European influence on the outlook and interpretation of American fashion. This reality also created a mistaken portrayal of the American fashion style as lacking in taste and originality.

The Second World War brought several changes to the American fashion scene. The most prominent of these was the blockage of the flow of fashion goods from Paris to America, as a result of the occupation of Paris by German troops. Americans were forced to seek alternatives in local fashion designers. This period marked the emergence of the modern American style through several talented designers like Harvey Berin and Tom Brigance. American fashion magazines such as *Vogue* and *Harper's Bazaar* promoted these local designers, which encouraged the fashion public to patronize them. The period also

contributed to the ascent of New York as a fashion city since the majority of the designers were based in New York. However, after the war Paris rose once more as the global fashion capital. The emergence of French designers like Christian Dior in 1947, Pierre Cardin in 1950 and Hubert Givenchy in 1952 contributed to the return of Paris' prominence in global fashion. Although Americans once more sought fashion inspiration from Paris, the taste for local fashion had been definitely roused and the American fashion industry had been born.

The growth of American fashion was also influenced by the numerous transformations in the consumer society and industrial sector. For example, advanced manufacturing techniques of ready-to-wear fashion made apparel more accessible and affordable to a wider consumer group. The rise of departmental stores such as Macy's, Bergedorf Goodman and Henry Bendel also contributed to fashion accessibility. The accessible fashion goods sold in these stores were complemented by the tailored apparel produced with sewing machines, which was invented in the nineteenth century. American consumers also adopted the use of the sewing machine for homemade clothes.

The rapid growth of the American middle class both in size and in wealth also contributed to the American fashion development. As the century moved into its second half, a larger proportion of the consumer population could afford either New York ready-to-wear clothes and accessories or the more expensive European imported fashion goods. As a result, several consumer segments emerged, conspicuously the ready-to-wear consumer group and the consumers of European luxury fashion goods. This marked the start of luxury goods segments still prevalent in today's American consumer society. Despite the different consumer groups, the American fashion taste remained simple and unfussy as a result of the simplicity of the lifestyle.

The increasing role of women in American society also led to fashion advancement, boosted by the invention of such home equipment as the washing machine. This created more time for female consumers to devote to fashion and their appearance. Also, more American women entered the corporate sector, which increased their level of sophistication and fashion outlook. The fashion development of American consumers was also encouraged by the adoption of several cultural and entertainment forms like the theatre and the opera, notably in New York.

The prolific fashion environment of the 1950s led to the emergence of several American designers still active today such as Bill Blass and Anne Klein in the 1960s. These designers adapted their creations to fit American society's expectation of easy and stylish fashion, rather than copying the styles from Paris, Milan and London. The sophisticated corporate fashion style also maintained a consistent undertone of simplicity. The simple American fashion was later established definitely by Jackie Kennedy, who was the country's first lady between 1961 and 1963. Her style constituted a combination of classic apparel accentuated with elegant accessories. She became a fashion icon for Americans and her influence eventually extended

to other parts of the world. She was also one of the most famous clients of Italian brand, Gucci. The adoration of her style by the American public was the beginning of celebrity fashion influence in America and the rebirth of this trend in the European modern fashion environment.

In addition to Jackie Kennedy, who projected American fashion to the world, the 1960s also witnessed the emergence of two iconic designers, Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein, who would eventually make American fashion global. The factors that contributed to their immediate success were the establishment of a standard American fashion style by Jackie Kennedy and also the lack of well-known American designers. Ralph Lauren, who launched his business in 1967, adopted a reserved English country style with American non-traditional undertones while Calvin Klein who started in 1968 projected the casual look through experimenting with sportswear and coat dresses.

By the 1970s, both designers had become highly successful experts in ready-to-wear fashion. In 1974, Ralph Lauren designed the wardrobe of the cast of the film 'The Great Gatsby', and stamped a definite place for himself in American fashion history. Calvin Klein's success was boosted by the care-free attitude of the consumer public and the growing independence of women. At the same time, fashion magazines like *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*, which had become reference points, promoted their designs and contributed immensely to their fame. The success of Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein encouraged other designers like Diane von Fürstenberg and Perry Ellis to launch their fashion businesses in the 1970s.

By the 1980s, the American fashion scene was competing on a par with several aspects of European fashion. However the advent of globalization and the increase in international travel, digital media and intercultural influences had an impact on American consumer society. The high cultural awareness acquired by several Americans led to a desire for overstated fashion especially from Europe. As a result, the demand for luxury goods from European brands like Gucci, Giorgio Armani and Chanel increased. The t-shirt, denim and sportswear that highlighted the 1970s in American fashion were replaced by a modern chic and trendy style. American women also became more health and fitness conscious and used luxury fashion as a platform to display their looks.

This environment contributed to the swift success of designers like Donna Karan who launched her fashion business in 1984, and Isaac Mizrahi in 1987. The American taste for flamboyant luxury fashion in the 1980s also led to a significant rise in the demand for Italian luxury fashion accessories and apparel. This factor amplified the affinity of American consumers with Italian luxury designers like Giorgio Armani, Versace and Dolce & Gabbana, still prevalent today. The love of Italian fashion by Americans would also later contribute to the success of Italian brands like Tod's, Hogan and Diesel.

The American luxury consumer market continued to mature into the 1990s. American fashion consumers adopted a more global outlook as a result of digital media, information technology, globalization and fashion magazines.

These factors also contributed to the rise in status of American designers like Michael Kors and Marc Jacobs, and mass-market fashion brands such as Guess and supermarket fashion like Wal Mart and Target. This decade also saw the most dramatic rise in the American luxury consumer population.

The American fashion environment of the 2000s is highly developed and sophisticated. The luxury consumer market has witnessed unprecedented expansion as a result of several wealth-creation opportunities. The wealth index of Americans is on a steady upward slope and a large proportion of these wealthy consumers are young. Their profiles, characteristics and attitudes towards luxury goods are different from their predecessors and their expectations include a complete luxury experience in product and service offerings. In response to this, several luxury brands began the 2000s by extending their product ranges to include a total lifestyle offering for the consumer. Luxury brands that previously produced accessories, expanded into apparel and vice versa. American designers such as Ralph Lauren and Calvin Klein launched high-end accessories, children's wear and furniture collections. Luxury brands also diversified into other products and services categories like hotels and restaurants as a strategy to extend their brands from 'luxury fashion brands' to 'luxury lifestyle brands'. Also, the American consumer's desire for convenient luxury shopping has led to the increased adoption of the e-retail of luxury goods by luxury brands. In addition to these, the American fashion market continuously influences global fashion trends and management practices through several developments.

The evolution of American fashion and its influence on the global luxury fashion industry has undoubtedly been significant. As the largest retail market in the world, the American fashion market has a stronghold on the global luxury fashion industry. The competitive and consumer fashion environments of America significantly influence the current state and future direction of the global fashion industry. As the market continues to advance and mature, its consumers' level of influence will doubtlessly remain important.

So, having said all this, what is the American fashion style? The answer to this question can be found everywhere. From New York, Paris, Milan, London, Stockholm, Hong Kong, Tokyo, Bombay, to Sydney and beyond. When we look around us, on the streets, in buses, trains and elevators, what we see in people is a relaxed attitude to fashion, an individual fashion interpretation that is sometimes elegant, sometimes casual, sometimes sophisticated yet with a consistent undertone of ease. That is the modern fashion and it is the American style.

The luxury brand index

Table 2.1 lists most of the fashion designers and brands that have contributed to shaping the global luxury fashion market. Some of these brands have

Table 2.1 Luxury fashion brands index

	Brand name*	Year	Founder	Country
1	Guerlain	1828	Pierre Francois Pascal Guerlain	France
2	Hermès	1837	Thierry Hermès	France
3	Loewe	1846	Enrique Loewe Roessberg	Spain
4	Cartier	1847	Louis Francois Cartier	France
5	Bally	1851	Carl Franz Bally	Switzerland
6	Louis Vuitton	1854	Louis Vuitton	France
7	La Maison Worth	1858	Charles Frederick Worth	France
8	Burberry	1856	Thomas Burberry	England
9	Lancel	1876	Alphonse and Angele Lancel	France
10	Cerruti	1881	The Cerruti Brothers	Italy
11	Bvlgari	1884	Sotirios Voulgaris	Italy
12	Lanvin	1889	Jeanne Lanvin	France
13	Jeanne Paquin	1890	Jeanne Paquin	France
14	Berluti	1895	Alessandro Berluti	France
15	Fendi	1897	Adele Casagrande Fendi	Italy
16	Paul Poiret	1904	Paul Poiret	France
17	Trussardi	1910	Dante Trussardi	Italy
18	Ermenegildo Zegna	1910	Ermenegildo Zegna	Italy
19	Chanel	1910	Gabrielle Coco Chanel	France
20	Madeleine Vionnet	1912	Madeleine Vionnet	France
21	Jean Patou	1912	Jean Patou	France
22	Prada	1913	Mario Prada	Italy
23	Balenciaga	1919	Cristobal Balenciaga	Spain
24	Gucci	1921	Guccio Gucci	Italy
25	Hugo Boss	1923	Hugo Boss	Germany
26	Norman Hartnell	1923	Norman Hartnell	England
27	Rochas	1924	Marcel Rochas	France
28	Elsa Schiaparelli	1927	Elsa Schiaparelli	France
29	Salvatore Ferragamo	1927	Salvatore Ferragamo	Italy
30	Nina Ricci	1932	Nina Ricci	France
31	Roger Vivier	1937	Roger Vivier	France
32	Celine	1945	Celine Vipiana	France
33	Brioni	1945	Nazareno Fonticoli and Gaetano Savini	Italy
34	Christian Dior	1947	Christian Dior	France
35	Pucci	1948	Emilio Pucci	Italy
36	Louis Feraud	1949	Louis Feraud	France
37	Pierre Cardin	1950	Pierre Cardin	France
38	Max Mara	1951	Achille Maramotti	Italy
39	Hanae Mori	1951	Hanae Mori	Japan
40	Givenchy	1952	Hubert de Givenchy	France
41	Chloé	1952	Jacques Lenoir and Gaby Aghion	France
42	Mary Quant	1955	Mary Quant	England
43	Krizia	1957	Mariuccia Mandelli	Italy
44	Guy Laroche	1957	Guy Laroche	France
45	Missoni	1958	Rosita and Ottavio Missoni	Italy
46	Mila Schön	1958	Mila Schön	Italy
47	Sergio Rossi	1950s	Sergio Rossi	Italy
48	Valentino	1960	Valentino Garavani	Italy

Table 2.1 *continued*

	Brand name*	Year	Founder	Country
49	Yves Saint Laurent	1962	Yves Saint Laurent	France
50	Azzaro	1962	Loris Azzaro	Italy
51	Cacharel	1962	Jean Bousquet	France
52	Jean-Louis Scherrer	1962	Jean-Louis Scherrer	France
53	Karl Lagerfeld	1963	Karl Lagerfeld	France
54	Judith Leiber	1963	Judith Leiber	USA
55	Richard Tyler	1964	Richard Tyler	Australia
56	Emmanuel Ungaro	1965	Emmanuel Ungaro	France
57	Roberto Cavalli	1965	Roberto Cavalli	Italy
58	Bottega Veneta	1966	Vicence Bottega Veneta	Italy
59	Paco Rabanne	1966	Paco Rabanne	Spain
60	Ralph Lauren	1967	Ralph Lauren	USA
61	Calvin Klein	1968	Calvin Klein	USA
62	Sonia Rykiel	1968	Sonia Rykiel	France
63	Anne Klein	1968	Anne Klein	USA
64	Jil Sander	1968	Jil Sander	Germany
65	Zandra Rhodes	1969	Zandra Rhodes	England
66	Come des Garçons	1969	Rei Kawakubo	Japan
67	Oscar de la Renta	1969	Oscar de la Renta	USA
68	Paul Smith	1970	Paul Smith	England
69	Kenzo	1970	Kenzo Takada	France
70	Bill Blass	1970	Bill Blass	USA
71	Issey Miyake	1970	Issey Miyake	Japan
72	Vivienne Westwood	1971	Vivienne Westwood	USA
73	Mulberry	1971	Roger Saul	England
74	Yohji Yamamoto	1972	Yohji Yamamoto	Japan
75	Diane Von Furstenberg	1972	Diane Von Fürstenbreg	USA
76	Manolo Blahnik	1972	Manolo Blahnik	England
77	Thierry Mugler	1973	Thierry Mugler	France
78	Alberta Ferretti	1974	Alberta Ferretti	Italy
79	Giorgio Armani	1974	Giorgio Armani	Italy
80	Perry Ellis	1975	Perry Ellis	USA
81	Jean Paul Gaultier	1976	Jean Paul Gaultier	France
82	Escada	1976	Wolfgang and Margaretha Ley	Germany
83	Helmut Lang	1977	Helmut Lang	Austria
84	John Rocha	1977	John Rocha	Ireland
85	Ana Molinari	1977	Ana Molinari	Italy
86	Gianni Versace	1978	Gianni Versace	Italy
87	Gianfranco Ferre	1978	Gianfranco Ferre	Italy
88	JP Tod's	1978	Diego Della Valle	Italy
89	Azzedine Alaia	1980	Azzedine Alaia	France
90	Marina Rinaldi	1980	Achille Maramotti	Italy
91	Michael Kors	1981	Michael Kors	USA
92	Carolina Herrera	1981	Carolina Herrera	USA
93	Anna Sui	1981	Anna Sui	USA
94	Kenneth Cole	1982	Kenneth Cole	USA
95	Elie Saab	1982	Elie Saab	Lebanon
96	Moschino	1983	Franco Moschino	Italy
97	Nicole Farhi	1983	Nicloe Farhi	England
98	Thomas Pink	1984	Thomas Pink	England

Table 2.1 *continued*

	Brand name*	Year	Founder	Country
99	Karl Lagerfeld	1984	Karl Lagerfeld	France
100	Tommy Hilfiger	1984	Tommy Hilfiger	USA
101	Donna Karan	1984	Donna Karan	USA
102	Marc Jacobs	1984	Marc Jacobs	USA
103	Dries Van Noten	1985	Dries Van Noten	Belgium
104	Dolce & Gabbana	1985	Domenico Dolce and Stefano Gabbana	Italy
105	Patrick Cox	1986	Patrick Cox	England
106	Hogan	1986	Diego Della Valle	Italy
107	Isaac Mizrahi	1987	Issac Mizrahi	USA
108	Christian Lacroix	1987	Christian Lacroix	France
109	Ted Baker	1988	Ted Baker	Scotland
110	John Galliano	1989	John Galliano	England
111	L.K. Bennett	1991	Linda Kristin Bennett	England
112	Christian Louboutin	1992	Christian Louboutin	France
113	Alexander McQueen	1994	Alexander McQueen	England
114	Anya Hindmarch	1994	Anya Hindmarch	England
115	Hussein Chalayan	1994	Hussein Chalayan	England
116	Marni	1994	Consuelo Castiglioni	Italy
117	Alessandro Dell'Acqua	1995	Alessandro Dell'Acqua	Italy
118	Viktor & Rolf	1995	Viktor Horsting and Rolf Snoeren	Netherlands
119	Paul & Joe	1996	Sophie Albou	France
120	Jimmy Choo	1996	Tamara Mellon	England
121	Mathew Williamson	1996	Mathew Williamson	England
122	Julien McDonald	1997	Julien McDonald	England
123	Narciso Rodriguez	1997	Narciso Rodriguez	USA
124	Alice Temperley	1999	Alice Temperley	England
125	Zac Posen	1999	Zac Posen	USA
126	Luella	2000	Luella Bartley	England
127	Stella McCartney	2001	Stella McCartney	England
128	André Ross	2004	Andrew Ross Blencowe	France
129	Tom Ford	2006	Tom Ford	USA

* Some brands might have been omitted as a result of either the unavailability of data regarding their founding dates and origins or the reluctance of the brands to reveal these.

continued to grow in strength while others have faded from the luxury fashion scene. The countries marked against the brands are the places where the brands were launched, and in most cases the brands' countries of origin.

Charles Frederick Worth: Le Père de la haute couture (1826–95)

It is impossible to write about the origins of luxury fashion without paying tribute to Charles Frederick Worth, the man who began everything about



Figure 2.1 *Charles Frederick Worth, the man who invented haute couture and later became the first fashion entrepreneur*



Figure 2.2 *A design of Worth showing his elaborate style and attention to detail*

modern luxury fashion. He has been hailed as the architect of luxury fashion branding and remains one of the most talented fashion designers of all time. He invented *haute couture* as we know it today and other modern fashion

practices like the creation of seasonal fashion styles and trends, the use of fashion models and the fashion brand name as a label.

Charles Worth, an Englishman who went to Paris to enter the world of fashion, made a name for himself in *haute couture* and an indelible mark in the world of fashion. His name still commands great respect in fashion circles and beyond, even in France where the English have been widely regarded as lacking aesthetic appreciation. His high creative talent and business sense set the scene for the current modern-day luxury goods industry. He created the first true luxury fashion brand and paved the way for the application of modern branding and marketing principles in the world of luxury fashion.



Figure 2.3 *A current lingerie design from recently launched brand Courtworth, an attempt at reviving the Worth fashion house. The style is inspired by the original designs of Charles Worth*

The early years

Charles Worth was born in England, at Wake House, North Street, in the small market town of Bourne in south Lincolnshire, on 13 October 1825. He came from a family of solicitors with no connections to dressmaking. He was the last child of five children, three of whom died in infancy, leaving his parents with Charles and an elder brother. His father had a respectable legal career and Worth lived in comfort during his early years in the social-class-conscious society. He expected his life to follow the tradition of the family in the legal profession just like his grandfather, father and brother. However, drastic events changed his destiny.

In 1836, when Worth was ten years old, his father became bankrupt as a result of heavy gambling, drinking and bad business decisions. He deserted his family and his town and was not to return for thirty years. His bankruptcy humiliated the family and Charles Worth never forgave his father, refusing to have any contact with him even after he became successful.

Worth's mother, Mary, fled the village with him out of shame as luckily her elder son and Worth's brother had already left home to begin his legal training. This period marked the start of Worth's struggle in life. At the age of 11, he began his life of menial jobs as a cleaner in a printer's shop but was extremely dissatisfied with it. His desire was to become an apprentice in a textiles and clothing shop, but this ambition proved difficult to fulfil as during this period dressmaking was considered mostly as women's domain in England. However, he felt that he could accomplish his dream in London but since he had no money to travel to London he began making ladies' Easter bonnets for sale to raise money. Eventually, in 1838, he and his mother managed to raise enough money for his train fare to London.

In 1838, at the age of 12, Worth started his apprenticeship with textile merchants Swan & Edgar of Regent Street, London. He worked there for seven years until the age of 19. During his apprenticeship, he diligently studied the different types of materials, their characteristics and functions. His role also entailed courteously welcoming customers at the store's entrance and attending to special requests, which is an equivalent of the present-day Customer Services. He was completely immersed in the world of textiles as he worked 12 hours per day and six days a week. He also lived in the store and slept under the counters at night. All he lived and breathed for seven years was fashion. This period laid the foundation that would eventually lead him to *haute couture* in Paris.

Charles Worth was continuously fascinated by the high level of knowledge and cultural exposure of his superiors and colleagues at Swan & Edgar. The tales of their extensive travels captivated him and he constantly listened and learned. He was determined to overcome the social downfall of his father and secretly longed to improve his education, which had been cut short at 11 years. He began reading literary books and visiting galleries frequently to

improve his level of knowledge. The National Gallery Trafalgar Square, which he visited often became his treasure of information. Through the displayed paintings he observed the changes in the dress styles of women over the centuries. He was intrigued by the progression of fashion and how the past influenced the future of fashion, sparking ideas of clothing women in his mind. The knowledge he acquired during this period later became valuable in his career in Paris.

As he continued his apprenticeship and self-education, his appetite for designing women's clothes grew and he became restless to satisfy it. He learnt from magazines that the centre of female fashion was Paris, and he immediately realized that his dreams could only become reality in Paris. He decided that his time in London would soon be over and he set his sights on Paris.

At the age of 19, Worth ended his apprenticeship period at Swan & Edgar and joined the prestigious establishment of Lewis & Allenby on the same Regent Street, London. He had become a sophisticated textile salesman and finessed his skills while planning to leave for Paris. His ambition was realized within a year.

Welcome to Paris

In order to realize his dream of going to Paris, Worth once again turned to his mother for financial support. Between them, they raised enough money to cover his transport fare from London to Paris, with £5 extra for pocket money. He had no contacts in Paris, no aristocratic connections, no knowledge of the French language, little education and almost no savings. Yet in the winter of 1845, just after his twentieth birthday, Charles Frederick Worth took his own destiny in his hands and left London for Paris to pursue his ambitions.

His early years in Paris were difficult. His lack of money, verbal and written communication skills in the French language and Parisian fashion knowledge forced him to take menial jobs to survive. His hopes of success in fashion were quickly dashed but he refused to concede to failure and return home. Even if he had wanted to, he didn't have enough money for his transport fare back to England.

After one year, he eventually found a menial job in a dry goods store, where he improved his French language skills and became comfortable with dealing with customers. He continued to visit galleries, especially the Louvre, where he observed scores of costumes in paintings. He also frequented the streets that housed the prestigious shops of silk and textile mercers of high fashion on Rue Richelieu. He nurtured his dream of becoming a dressmaker although this was also considered a woman's job in Paris. Worth was determined to become a dressmaker rather than a man's clothing tailor, because he knew where his talent lay.

He eventually got his first real job in the textile trade in 1847, two years after arriving in Paris. It was at the prestigious textile merchants, Maison Gagelin on Rue Richelieu in the current first district of Paris. He worked at Gagelin for a total of 11 years from late 1847 to 1858, doing a similar job as he had at Lewis & Allenby in London but in a more sophisticated environment and in a foreign language.

Charles Worth witnessed several changes in the French fashion style as the society evolved. At the beginning of his stay in Paris, French fashion was at the height of its majestic glory and influence, but became austere through the political and economic upheavals such as the ousting of King Louis Philippe, the death of the French monarchy, the new Republic and the Napoleonic Empire. Also, the French revolution of 1848 brought a decline in the flamboyance of women's clothes and a general demure in French fashion. Through all this mayhem, Worth often wondered if he was in the right place.

The eye-opener

As the political crisis gave way to a more stable environment, a positive fashion and social attitude emerged in Paris. The construction of eminent buildings such as the Opera together with state visits and official receptions that followed their openings, created an opportunity for luxury to flourish. The opulence that accompanied these grand ceremonies aroused a taste for luxury fashion in the upper social class, which greatly benefited designers, jewellers, dressmakers and textile traders.

Worth was awestruck by the magnificent events in the French world of royalty and aristocracy. His first direct involvement with this world of opulence was when Gagelin, the company he worked for, was asked to supply the materials for Empress Eugenie's trousseau during her wedding to Napoleon III in January 1853. This came through their connection with dressmakers because although Gagelin was a textile supplier, they were constantly consulted by dressmakers on the suitability of specific materials for certain styles. The association of Gagelin with the wedding of Napoleon and Empress Eugenie gained Gagelin immense publicity in fashion magazines and fashion society, leading to increased sales. This was Worth's first lesson of the important role of aristocratic and celebrity connection to the success of a fashion business. Empress Eugenie, who was known for her style and charm, would later play a key role in Worth's success.

Paris had at this time gained great influence and attracted global attention as the brightest city in Europe. The *nouveaux riches* such as bankers and industrialists contributed to the social expansion of the city. The world looked to Paris as a source of fashion, culture and the *art de vivre* and the ever-observant Worth spotted an opportunity in the newly wealthy Parisian society. He saw the changing mannerisms and attitudes of the wealthy towards fashion

and also the influence this had on the rest of Europe and beyond. The consumer public were more influenced by the destructuring of the society and the progression brought by industrial advancement. Worth recognized a market gap that had been created, which no designer or dressmaker had identified. During this period, the most prominent dressmaker was the renowned Rose Bertin, who had dressed Marie-Antoinette and other royals and aristocrats. Her approach to dressmaking and serving her clients, however, remained structured to the strict aristocratic system, even as the society evolved.

Worth's creative mind buzzed with ideas and thoughts of the new societal trends and he became restless to create women's clothes to address society's needs. He endlessly questioned the dressmakers he was in contact with about the tastes and styles of the nobles, which provided him with a defined image of the current consumer needs. He also relentlessly sought opportunities to realize his ambition of dressing women.

During this period Worth met one of the young apprentices at Gagelin, Marie-Augustine Vernet, who he would later marry and who would become the catalyst for his future success. As their relationship grew, he began making dresses for her. The styles were according to the emerging tastes that he could decipher from observing the society. The customers of Gagelin took notice of Marie-Augustine's finely cut and stylish clothes, which were different from the fussy clothing of the day. They began to request the same designs. As the demand grew, Worth asked Gagelin to start a women's department, which Marie-Augustine could manage. This idea horrified the management of Gagelin as they were considered the most distinguished silk mercers in Paris and arguably in the world of fashion and couldn't be linked with mere dressmaking. Worth pointed out examples of the dressmakers who had expanded their businesses to include the sale of textile alongside dresses, creating more choices and making selection easier for customers. After several rounds of persuasion and continuous pressure from customers, Worth was finally allowed to open a small dressmaking department within the company premises. He became one of the first men in the woman's trade of dressmaking in Paris. His presence in a textile house gave him great advantage in the choice and variety of fabrics for customers and his contacts with the silk mills in Lyon was an additional plus.

Worth's style was simple but he was obsessed with the perfect cut, exact fit and refined finishing. He also remained flexible and experimented with new concepts and colours. He was an extremely meticulous man and the great attention to detail that he paid to his designs and clothes separated them from others. These attributes would later elevate his clothes from dressmaking to *haute couture*.

In 1851, Gagelin was selected as a member of the French delegation at 'The Great Exhibition of Works of Industry of All Nations' at London's Hyde

Park. Worth's dress designs were displayed and won a gold medal. This was an honour for Gagelin and the entire French delegation. After this event, Gagelin began advertising Worth's designs in fashion magazines. Four years later, in 1855, Worth's designs won another first-class medal at the 'Exposition Universelle' in Paris. He had become an established dressmaker and Gagelin eventually realized his great value.

Worth, also recognizing his worth to his employers, requested a job promotion, possible partnership with the company, better working condition for his then pregnant wife Marie-Augustine, and the opportunity to rent one of the spare rooms at the store premises. He was refused all his requests. He realized that his time was Gagelin was over and he decided to leave the company to start his own business.

Worth and Bobergh (1858–70)

Charles Worth partnered with another dissatisfied employee at Gagelin, the Swedish Otto Bobergh, and together they raised the capital to start their fashion business. Their first store, Worth & Bobergh was opened at no.7 rue de la Paix, close to the Jardin de Tuileries in Paris, in 1858. Their strategic location in the centre of Paris meant that they were close to other dressmakers but, more importantly, to luxury apartments and the potential wealthy customers who lived in them.

Worth continued to design and make clothes in his signature simple and perfect cut style, while going through the challenges of a new start-up business with Bobergh. Their big break came almost as an accident a year later through the wife of a prominent novelist Octave Feuillet. She was to attend an imperial reception hosted by Emperor Napoleon and Empress Eugenie and was disappointed with the dress made by her dressmaker. In desperation she went to Worth for a solution at the last minute. Worth not only created a perfect dress for her on the same day (which was unheard of) but also gave her make-up as a complementary product. During the reception, Empress Eugenie noticed the dress and asked for the name of the couturier. When told that he was an Englishman, she was appalled and even amused at the thought of a male dressmaker. Although she didn't immediately patronize him, she didn't forget the dress or its maker.

At the beginning of their business venture, little business came the way of Worth & Bobergh and they became desperate for exposure. Worth understood that one of the quickest and most effective ways to rise in prominence as a dressmaker was through celebrities. He searched for the right candidate who was both influential in the fashion society and a friend of Empress Eugenie. He found his answer in high society lady Princess Von Metternich, wife of Austria's Ambassador to France and a close friend of the Empress. Worth and Bobergh sent Marie Worth to her with an album of their designs. Von Metternich was impressed with the designs and ordered two dresses

immediately. She was also amazed that Worth required only one fitting to make the dress instead of the standard six fittings and was even more astonished with the results. She wore one of Worth's dresses to a ball and Empress Eugenie took notice. When the Empress enquired about the couturier, she was once again told that it was Charles Worth, the Englishman. This time, she sent for Worth at once. Worth & Bobergh thus became the official dressmakers of the Empress in 1860, two years after starting their business.

Since Empress Eugenie was the most fashionable and influential woman in Europe, all the royalties and aristocrats copied her style and sought her dressmakers. Within one year, Worth & Bobergh had clients across Europe and as far away as New York. Their client list consisted of the 'who's who' of royalty, fashion and society, including Queen Victoria of England. Their influence escalated in such a short time that Worth in particular became a personal clothes consultant to the Empress while other royals and nobles across Europe scrambled to be on his client list.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, Worth's fashion credibility and authority became established and he rose to become the dominant figure in French and global fashion. His astute business sense and innovative spirit led him to revolutionize the fashion industry, changing the simple function of dressmaking to become the art of *haute couture*. He also introduced the use of human models to showcase his designs, instead of the standard wooden busts. He organized private shows of his designs to clients, shop buyers and textile manufacturers, establishing the practice of fashion shows and private shopping. He was also the first couturier to have a seasonal collection and eventually became the first fashion business tycoon. Instead of going to his wealthy clients for fittings, he compelled them to come to his store, with the exception of Empress Eugenie. No one was too important for him and he soon became the most expensive couturier in the world. By 1864, he had over 1,000 seamstresses working for him.

During the early years of success, Worth's wife played a key role as both the model of his creations and the public face of Worth & Bobergh. In the current luxury fashion environment, her title would have been 'Brand Ambassador'. She regularly attended high society events where she modelled her husband's creations and created awareness for his business. In the process, she also became a fashion force in her own right.

The business of Worth & Bobergh, however, experienced a set-back through the negative impact of the French political crisis and war that preceded the end of Napoleon's reign. The unstable social environment forced Worth & Bobergh's clients, who were mainly royals and aristocrats, to minimize their fashion consumption. Otto Bobergh, sensing gloomy years ahead, requested to dissolve the partnership and share their profits; he left the business and Worth found himself alone. Later, during the war, Worth was forced to close down his store.

La Maison Worth (1871–1952)

Charles Worth reopened his couture shop as 'La Maison Worth' in 1871, but since most of his prestigious clients had been exiled during the war he found himself starting afresh. He diversified into theatre costume while continuing to design women's dresses. During this period he also mastered the art of self-promotion and incorporated art in his design and image, which set him apart from rising competition. Worth critically studied the fashion society to innovate fashion styles and anticipate changes in women's tastes. This was one of his most important business tools and contributed to the success of La Maison Worth.

As the political climate stabilized towards the end of the nineteenth century, Worth's business grew once more. He regained his authority in fashion and ultimately became a fashion entrepreneur and somewhat the fashion world's ruler. He was the first couturier to set seasonal trends and impose his tastes on his customers. The fashion society revered him and the rich and famous sought his attention. At the height of his fame, La Maison Worth was the most prestigious couture house for design and apprenticeship training.

Charles Frederick Worth died of pneumonia on 10 March 1895 aged 70. The news of his death reverberated in the fashion world amid great homage for his work. After his death, his wife Marie-Augustine and sons Gaston and Jean-Philippe, who were already working at La Maison Worth, continued to run the business. Gaston managed the finances while Jean-Philippe was in charge of design and production. Although they applied the skills and competences they learnt from their father, Charles Worth, La Maison Worth was never the same.

La Maison Worth flourished well into the 1920s but the couture house had to deal with rife competition from rising couturiers like Jeane Lanvin who opened her design house in 1890 and Paul Poiret, who came along in 1903. Also Coco Chanel emerged in 1910 and Madeleine Vionnet in 1912. These designers understood their consumers and the fashion requirements of the changing society, as much as Charles Worth did during his lifetime. They continually innovated to meet customer needs while La Maison Worth remained inflexible and restrictive. As a result, the popularity of the competitors grew and loyalty to Worth's house diminished. In a bid to promote their design house, which had also become a fashion brand, Jean-Philippe Worth wrote a biography of his father in 1928. The book was a success and Worth's name soared once again in fashion circles. The glory was, however, short-lived as this venture wasn't backed by concrete offerings of desirable clothing. La Maison Worth continued designing for the woman of the previous century, while its competitors had moved forward with current social needs. Finally, in 1953, after several years of business depreciation, La Maison Worth was taken over by the House of Paquin.

Modern business principles

The story of Charles Worth hasn't been recounted simply for entertainment, it is rather an important illustration that draws out highly relevant business guidelines for practitioners in the luxury fashion sector and beyond.

Charles Worth applied two major principles that made his fashion business highly successful. The first was his utilization of influential people in society as a publicity tool. He had an early realization of the importance of attaching his name to the celebrities that could influence fashion, and this practice continues to be applied by current luxury brands, notably with Hollywood stars.

The second business principle that he applied was the use of insight into consumer behaviour as a guide to creating desirable clothes. Worth understood the important role that societal evolution played in fashion, and was able to anticipate change and remain flexible enough to innovate his designs and business approaches according to changing consumer tastes and attitudes at different times.

Other business lessons that can be drawn from the fashion innovator and genius, Charles Frederick Worth, are the following:

- 1 He never gave up his ambition to become a couturier.
- 2 He spotted opportunities quickly and moved swiftly to exploit them.
- 3 He was bold enough to enter an industry dominated by women and was ready to be a laughing-stock in the short term in order to achieve his long-term goals.
- 4 He understood his business thoroughly and gained an unparalleled level of expertise in both textile merchandizing and dressmaking.
- 5 He knew his signature style and never compromised it.
- 6 He understood the concept of differentiation and innovation and knew when a product and a brand required extension.
- 7 He was a true trend-watcher and recognized the evolution of his market environment.
- 8 He knew that the rich and famous not only mattered in society but are an effective tool for brand promotion.
- 9 He was a skilled self-promoter and extended his personality to his brand image.
- 10 He trained himself to be the best in his field and he became the best.

Additional business lessons can be drawn from the factors that contributed to the demise of La Maison Worth. They are the following:

- 1 La Maison Worth became too comfortable in its market leadership position and relaxed its competitive edge, giving room for newcomers to encroach

into its market space. Like the famous ship, Titanic, the couture house believed that it couldn't sink.

- 2 After Charles Worth's death, La Maison Worth overlooked changing societal trends and evolving consumer tastes.
- 3 The couture house ignored their competitors and failed to recognize their potential.
- 4 After the death of Charles Worth, La Maison Worth focused on promoting the spirit of Charles Worth to a diminishing consumer group instead of re-inventing the brand to attract a new consumer group and retain the interest of the old consumers.
- 5 Charles Frederick Worth did not prepare his design house well enough for his demise.

If La Maison Worth were still in existence with a similar level of prominence and fame, the brand value would have been among the highest in the world of luxury fashion. Although La Maison Worth no longer exists, Charles Worth undoubtedly set the foundation of the modern luxury fashion sector as an important aspect of the global society and a strong global economic force.

Great moments in the history of fashion

The history and evolution of fashion is undoubtedly fascinating. The world of fashion has witnessed several important phenomena that have brought change to both its consumption patterns and management practices. Here are ten events that so far can be summed up as the greatest moments in the evolution of luxury fashion. They incorporate the facet of creative design, the influence of society and the management aspect of fashion:

- 1 The early Egyptian era of opulence.
- 2 The Italian Renaissance period of art and fashion.
- 3 The reign of France's King Louis XIV and the rise of French luxury fashion and lifestyle.
- 4 The century of Charles Frederick Worth and the invention of *haute couture*.
- 5 Coco Chanel, Christian Dior and the birth of modern luxury.
- 6 The rise of New York and American ready-to-wear.
- 7 The second Italian fashion revolution of the sixties and seventies.
- 8 Tom Ford, the revival of Gucci and commercial luxury fashion.
- 9 Bernard Arnault, LVMH and modern luxury fashion management.
- 10 The internet revolution and e-commerce.

The history of luxury fashion branding indicates the unquestionable role of society in laying a foundation for the sector and contributing to its development.

It also identifies important chronological events that have shaped the luxury brands that we know today. These, together with constant interaction with luxury brands, provide a framework for the current and future practices of the sector and the continuous relationship between consumers and luxury brands.