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Moments of Luxury: A Qualitative Account of the Experiential Essence of Luxury

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Abstract

This study advances an unconventional perspective on the experiential essence of luxury, with the aim to uncover different types of luxury moments and shed light on their shared qualities and momentousness, independent of consumption styles or contexts. The findings of an interpretive study identify five types of luxury moments: interrupting, climactic, disrupting, ritualistic, and terminating. They differ in their temporal focus and degree of contrast to ordinary life, created through shared experiential qualities. These qualities set moments of luxury apart from other pleasurable moments, since moments of luxury are freeing, happy, perfect, scarce, caring, and exciting. The concept of luxury moments helps illuminate the essence of experiential luxury and unfolds in themes of growth and advancement, bliss and Eudaimonia, unity with the other, and awe and self-transcendence, thus adding to the understanding of the meaning of luxury in liquid times.

Keywords: Unconventional luxury, Moment, Experience, Liquid consumption, Temporality

"Well, maybe that is what real luxury is after all." Salvatore Accardo smiles as one of his daughters toddles after him. "Looking at children's eyes and feeling the love. That is just beyond comparison."

—Interview with Salvatore Accardo, Italian violinist (Ricca & Robins, 2012, p. 18)

1. Introduction

Recent research challenges traditional object-oriented and ownership-based perspectives on luxury, which stigmatize luxury as a conspicuous marker of status, wealth, and power, drawing on the ideas of the leisure class (Veblen, 1902). Critiques have come from many areas (e.g., Dittmar, 2008; Khalid & Qadeer, 2018; Mason, 1981; Randolph, 2007; Syse & Mueller, 2015). In liquid modernity (Baumann, 2000), the idea of luxury has become multi-faceted and fluid and encompasses multiple meanings. Traditional forms of high luxury—a yacht in the harbor of the Côte d'Azur, a stay at the Burj Al Arab in Dubai, or a private jet—will always remain high luxuries. Yet they are only affordable to the super-rich and cover just a small portion of what luxuriousness means to consumers. High luxury is also complemented by innumerous forms of democratized or new luxury (Danziger, 2005; Kapferer & Laurent, 2016; Thomas, 2007) and accessible, masstige objects of consumption imitating the imagined conspicuous display of belongingness and status among the wealthy of the world (Silverstein, Fiske, & Butman, 2004). As the availability and affordability of more masstige luxury have become ubiquitous, the meaning of luxury has become increasingly contested and transformed. Viewing the transformation of luxury through a historical lens, Cristini, Kauppinen-Räisänen, Barthod-Prothade, and Woodside (2017) describe its development from an essence related to being, sharing, and sensing to a current state of desire for having, owning, and using luxurious objects. They critically discuss this turn toward public conspicuousness, mass-marketed, profit-oriented creations of mediocre quality for short-term usage as pandering to the self—a concept of luxury that is firmly rooted in status-seeking consumption and the contemporary market logic of a consumerist society. This

managerial critique is complemented by recent theorizations of a general change in consumption, related to digital, access-based practices and global mobility—that is, a shift from solid to liquid consumption (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017). As consumption moves from acquisition and ownership to temporary use (Belk, 2014), liquid consumption renders ownership of mass-marketed luxury objects less important. Next to solid consumption, ephemerality, access, and dematerialization of consumption mark a new trend toward flexibility, fluidity, and lightness of consumption (e.g., Hammerslough, 2001; Molesworth & Denegri-Knott, 2012; Wood & Solomon, 2009).

Research makes several advances in this direction, outlining new meanings attached to luxury and new unconventional manners of luxury experience and consumption. One observation is the rise of experiential, less conspicuous forms of consumption (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982; Pine & Gilmore, 2011; Rifkin, 2001). With the dilution of the signaling ability of traditional forms of object-oriented consumption, consumers are turning to more inconspicuous consumption that is more difficult to be imitated by others (Eckhardt, Belk, & Wilson, 2015). Berger and Ward (2010) and Han, Nunes, and Drèze (2010) make a similar observation among sophisticated, wealthy consumers with a low need for status, who are increasingly differentiating themselves from less wealthy consumers with a high need for status through "quiet," inconspicuous luxury consumption.

Luxury has also become more private and intimate, a means to develop the consumer self beyond sheer signaling, by enjoying having, doing, being, sharing, and becoming through meaningful luxury experience, be it little, "everyday" luxuries or extraordinary ones (Bauer, von Wallpach, & Hemetsberger, 2011; Hemetsberger, von Wallpach, & Bauer, 2012). Despite common thinking that luxuries involve large expenditures, often small things are considered "little luxuries," as they serve to boost, transform, and shape consumers' sense of self (Bauer et al., 2011; Belk, in press). Lipstick, chocolate, and other small indulgences are

often self-gifts that can play as much of a role as major luxury expenditures in people's lives (Eckhardt et al., 2015). The little luxuries also often exert a specific experiential quality, the lived experience, which is of extraordinary importance to consumers. Resembling the idea of liquid consumption, studies find that luxury—described from a consumer perspective—is rather ephemeral, immaterial, transient, and fluid and manifests itself in moments (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Potavanich, Banister & Roper, 2015).

Holmqvist, Ruiz, and Peñazola (2015) deploy a practice lens on luxury consumption and find moments of luxury in temporal, exclusive, and glamorous enjoyment that demarcates the extraordinary from ordinary moments and endow them with luxuriousness. Woermann and Rokka (2015) describe such consumption moments as powerful flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) resulting from a perfect time flow of consumer practice elements, such as in the context of paintball and free skiing. Even painful, tough mudding experiences or long pilgrimages are hailed as luxurious by consumers in retrospect, as they provide them with sensory intensifications, regenerative escapes, deceleration, and narratives of a fulfilled life (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019; Scott, Cayla, & Cova, 2017). These studies provide first insights into the momentousness of experiential luxury. However, the common experiential characteristics and qualities of these meaningful, precious moments are still under-developed.

Recent research provides a plethora of possible meanings of luxury that resonate with the fragmented identities and bricolage consumption styles of the postmodern consumer. The mounting evidence of experiential, ephemeral, and liquid forms of luxury consumption and their relationship to time and moments, in particular, highlight their meaningfulness in contemporary consumer culture. While recent studies provide a good overview of experiential luxury (e.g., Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Holmqvist et al., 2015; Potavanich et al., 2015), we recognize the necessity for further investigation and theoretical advancement of

what exactly constitutes luxuriousness in consumer experiences. In a search for a comprehensive concept of luxuriousness that includes liquid forms of consumption, we draw on Hemetsberger et al.'s (2012) concept of luxury *moments*—the very instance in which luxuriousness manifests itself in the consumer's perception. This study therefore investigates the momentousness of luxury and the experiential qualities of those moments that are so precious to people that they perceive them as luxurious, meaningful, and valuable.

We add to prior work on experiential luxury consumption and contribute an interpretive account of the type and quality of moments of luxury that make consumers' lives meaningful. Ours is the first study to take an essential[1] experiential perspective on luxury, independent of its (im-)materiality, solidity or liquidity, ownership or access-based nature, (extra-)ordinariness, (un-)affordability, or (in)conspicuousness. Instead, we focus on consumers' most precious moments. Emphasizing the experiential qualities of moments of luxury has valuable implications for researchers and marketers who want to understand meaningful and self-relevant consumption experiences with luxury goods and services.

2. The concept of the moment

A moment is a "primary temporal unit" (Zemka, 2012b, p. 1), "a slice through time" (Stevenson, 2010, p. 1141), as well as an artificial notion that is of universal significance. It is characterized by its punctual structure and passes by in a trice, though it has enduring consequences (Zemka, 2012b). As such, a moment is linked to the concept of Chronos, according to which time is linear and measurable and consequently able to assign temporal beginnings and endings (Robinson, 2015). It is a liminal moment of "time out of time" (Houben, 2002).

[1] Here, *essence* serves to describe our search for essential structures and qualities of moments rather than the identification of an essential core (see Vagle, 2014).

Etymologically, a "moment" also captures the appropriate point in time for doing something or for something to happen. From the Latin word *mōmentum*, a moment is a moving force, a movement, or a decisive and pivotal instant (Klotz & Dietsch, 1846; Zemka, 2012a). Scholars in physics use the term "moment(um)" to express "a turning effect produced by a force" (Stevenson, 2010, p. 922), while other disciplines focus on its joint meaning "as movement, change *and* time" (Zemka, 2012a, p. 17). In Western philosophy, for example, the interrelationship between the temporal and forceful dimensions of the moment finds expression in its relationship to the idea of change (Zemka, 2012a).

According to the qualitative concept of *Kairos*, which originates from the Greek word for "opportunity" and is defined as a "propitious moment for decision or action" (Stevenson 2010, p. 954), time is measured in moments rather than in seconds (Robinson, 2015; Van Manen, 2017). According to prior research (Ariely & Carmon, 2000; Fredrickson, 2000; Kahneman, 2000), people evaluate (past or future) experiences by referencing just a few selected key instances, or moments that exhibit certain experiential qualities that involve the consumer emotionally, physically, intellectually, and spiritually (Mossberg, 2007). Rather than being merely temporal slots, some moments are perceived as "right" or "perfect" because they are pregnant with chance and change. This is the case, for example, when they have the momentum or force to initiate, terminate, disrupt, or interrupt experiences, thus enabling people to recognize the moment as being special and allowing them to seize the opportunity that lies within it. As such, "moments" are meaningful events that have the power to infuse people's lives with joy and value, comprising small-scale moments and rare, big, life-altering ones. However, they also evoke a "sense of the ephemeral, fleeting and transitory" (Gabb & Fink, 2015, p. 984) and of being instantaneous and serendipitous (McTaggart, 1908; Merton & Barber 2004; Van Manen, 2017).

Some incidents loom larger than others, though the process of experiencing is, itself, a continuous one (Ariely & Carmon, 2000; Kahneman, 2000). A classification of moments occurs when more importance is attached to some moments than to others (Wallach, 2008). The assignment of momentous importance may be made during the moment or retrospectively, but it cannot be fully anticipated in advance; something that "should" be important may not be, and vice versa. Moments of luxury are those little moments or experiences that entail small-scale disruptions of mundane, everyday life, as well as the rarely occurring big ones, which are of major significance and often induce life-altering changes. Small delightful moments encompass a variety of short-lived, little, mundane instances that hold the potential to imbue people's everyday lives with happiness (Gabb & Fink, 2015), just as "little nothings" in everyday life can make a significant difference to well-being (Belk, 1996; Capellanus, 1960). In addition to the "little" exhilarating moments, people experience substantial, big, remarkable "positions in time" (McTaggart, 1908, p. 458) that are prominent in their lives and imply persistent effects. Superlative, big moments or peak experiences (Maslow, 1971) fill people with amazement, revelation, and reverence. They signal that life is advancing, which makes them meaningful, new, and unforgettable. Often, they happen all of a sudden and in a condition that is marked by inner, emotional disturbance. Maslow (1971) refers to these experiences as ecstatic, straightforward moments that entail consequences related to viewing the world from a different mindset and involve finding one's inner self (Maslow, 1971). These moments might even have long-lasting effects and turn people into a self they find superior to their previous one (Webber, 2010). Big moments are also akin to "defining moments," also referred to as turning points, breakthroughs, and phenomenal moments, that have a far-reaching impact. They possess a freeing and meaningful potential to provide new life explorations and discoveries (Lyons, 2015).

In addition, Webber (2010) indicates that many peak experiences may contain spiritual moments that seem to be elusive because they bring about emotions that are inapprehensible within the scope of trivial, everyday life (Goldstein, 2007). They are construed as being divine, eternal, and transcendent (Pargament & Mahoney, 2005) and pervaded with sacred qualities such as a perception of being connected with and encouraged by divinity, gratitude, deference, kindness, and inner harmony; they make people feel valued, esteemed, sanctified, and hallowed (Goldstein, 2007). Pivotal moments are unique, confined, and significant and involve intense feelings and emotions, interrupt the continuous flow of ordinary life at scarce points in time, and even exert a lifelong impact. Vivid memories of these experiences hold the potential to affect, motivate, guide, and preserve behaviors, assumptions, and values up to the present—long after the originating incident that caused those changes and memories has taken place (Pillemer, 2001).

In summary, the notion of *moment* is multi-faceted and not limited to a temporal dimension, but accentuates the specific experiential qualities of these ephemeral instances and the changes they induce in people's selves and lives. Consequently, we conceptualize a moment of luxury as a temporal unit that provides an experiential and highly significant vantage point from which a luxury experience is (retrospectively) anchored and appreciated. Directing the analysis of luxury moments to the shared experiential qualities of such moments brings pivotal aspects of consumers' luxury experiences to the foreground and allows us to set them apart from other moments of everyday pleasure that do not share all these qualities.

3. Methodology

In adopting an experiential perspective on luxury (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Tynan McKechnie, & Chhuon, 2010), we aim to single out and characterize particular moments that qualify as luxury from the perspective of the beholder. In line with this research objective,

this study's overall approach is interpretive, focusing on individuals' lived experiences (Thompson, 1997) and "striving towards empathetic understanding" (Tracy, 2013, p. 41). Inspired by principles of classic phenomenological investigation, as outlined by the German philosopher Edmund Husserl, the data collection focused on individuals' "intentional experience … that considers without presuppositions drawn from other quarters both the experience (i.e., its directedness, also referred to as 'noesis') and its object (referred to as 'noema') just as they are experienced" (Drummond, 2015). This also means that as researchers, we engaged in bracketing by suspending judgment, while focusing purely on how individuals experience the noema–noesis correlation (Farina, 2014).

We identified Generation Y (so-called Millennials born in the 1980s and 1990s; Howe & Strauss, 2007) as a particularly relevant sample for this study. Members of this generation tend to define themselves more by what they do than by what they own, and they highly appreciate instant pleasure and extraordinary experiences (Bellaiche, Eirinberg, Mei-Pochtler, & Wiederin, 2012). These characteristics qualify Millennials as a critical sample who are likely to adopt a more experiential perspective of luxury than other generations. With their relatively high discretionary income, Generation Y also emerges as an important future market for consumer brands (Barton, Lara, Jeff, & Egan, 2012) and luxury items (Chu & Kamal, 2011). The focus on a single generational cohort is supported by generational theory, which claims that each generation is characterized by "somewhat predictable traits, values and beliefs, along with skills, attributes, capacities, interests, expectations and preferred modus operandi directly attributable to their generational location" (Pendergast, 2010, p. 1). Applying non-probability sampling (Ritchie, Lewis, & Elam, 2003), this study thus only included members of Generation Y. To still achieve maximum variation of subjective views on moments of luxury of this generation, we ensured that the sample was diverse with regard to gender, nationality, civil state, educational background, and occupation. The ultimate

sample consisted of 34 participants, recruited by means of snowball sampling (for an overview of sample characteristics, see the Appendix).

Acknowledging that the personalized meaning participants ascribe to moments of luxury can only be understood if contextualized and situated in relation to culturally shared knowledge (Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994), we collected data in a multi-sited empirical field covering three Western countries (Austria, Denmark, and Canada). Email correspondence aided in recruiting participants, scheduling appointments, and providing participants with instructions on how to prepare for the interview. Preparation for the interview involved collecting six personal photographs that captured "moments of luxury" for them. Photographs can serve as a communication bridge between researcher and participant and between present and past and support participants in conveying feelings they had at the time of the experiences in elaborate narratives (Carlsson, 2001; Zaltman, 1997; Ziller, 1990). During the interview, photographs served as "stimuli for projective interviewing" (Heisley & Levy, 1991, p. 257). Open grand-tour questions generated rich descriptions of the moment of luxury related to each photograph (Spradley, 1979). Using "floating prompts" (McCracken, 1988, p. 35), we encouraged participants to elaborate on actual experiences, meanings, feelings, and symbolism associated with the photographs. These non-intrusive and non-directive interview tactics provided deep insights into participants' actual experiences. In a second step, we asked participants for "missing pictures" to cover moments of luxury that could not be captured with a photograph (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995). Finally, sorting photographs into piles encouraged participants to propose a subjective classification of their moments of luxury (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995). Interviews took place mainly in participants' homes and, in rare cases, via Skype if circumstances prevented meeting participants in person. Interviews lasted between 50 minutes and 2.5 hours, with an average duration of 1.5

hours. We tape-recorded and transcribed participants' verbal explications verbatim and obtained copies of the 204 personal photographs that participants brought to the interview.

With the goal of gaining a holistic interpretation of personalized meanings ascribed to moments of luxury as well as shared meanings across narratives and photographs, data analysis followed Thompson's (1997) hermeneutic framework and constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2008). In an iterative process of inductive categorization (Spiggle, 1994), we moved from open, to axial, to selective coding of data, obtaining progressively deeper theoretical results at each step. However, rather than expecting meaning to emerge from the selective coding itself, we employed abductive reasoning as well (Belk & Sobh, 2019). All interviews were independently analyzed by a minimum of two researchers, supported by the qualitative analysis software Nvivo. Interpretations were compared to gain consensual understanding of the data (Arnold & Fischer, 1994), and inconsistencies were resolved through discussion between the researchers.

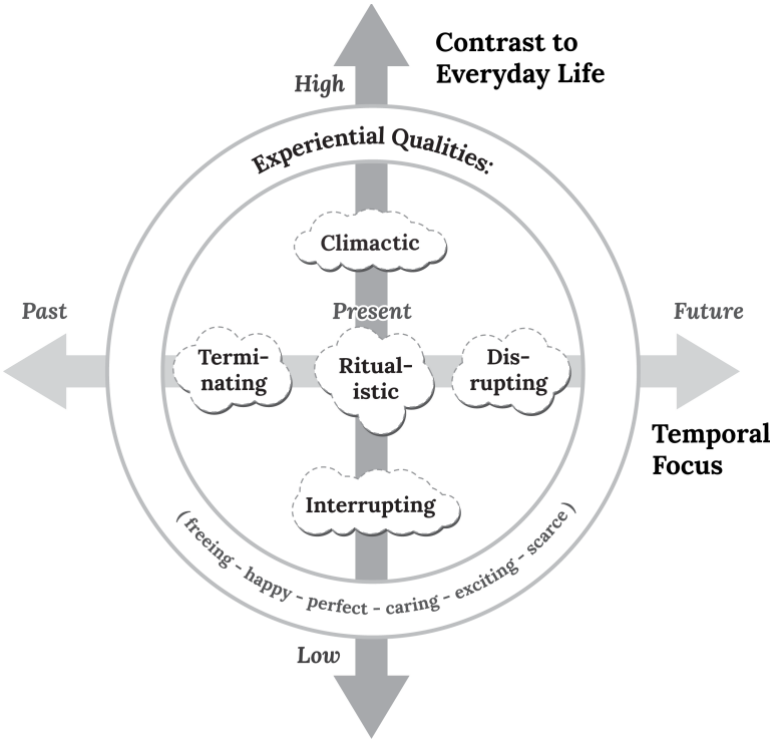
Foreshadowing the results, we identified five types of luxury moments described through more than 2,500 excerpts that we pooled into different types of experiential qualities characterizing these moments. We also coded structural/situational aspects of the described moments (e.g., scenery, people involved). However, we found no systematic difference in whether the moment of luxury played out in a library, a tropical island, or a mountain top, nor did we find other structural/situational differences. Instead, in line with the basic claim of our study, the significant difference between a luxury and non-luxury moment lies in the experiential qualities of the specific moment. Ultimately, the comparison between emerging experiential themes and existing research informed our theorizing on these moments of luxury.

4. Findings

Iterative readings of the 196 moments revealed that participants couched luxury moments in narratives that varied in temporal focus and their experiential contrast to everyday life. We identified five types of luxury moments—interrupting, climactic, disrupting, ritualistic, and terminating—that have the capacity to contrast with the profanity of everyday life in a way that the participants could appreciate due to the moments' shared experiential qualities (being freeing, happy, perfect, scarce, caring, and exciting). In the following paragraphs, we first give an overview of the different types of moments and then describe the ways the shared experiential qualities unfolded in each of these moments of luxury.

The description of the five identified types of luxury moments rests mainly on the moments' temporal focus (past, present, or future) and contrast to everyday live (high/low). *Interrupting moments of luxury* focus on how the "here and now" can create luxurious, but moderate, contrasts to everyday life, even in some cases on a repeated basis, such as when encountering beautiful views while going skiing in a nearby area. Similar to interrupting moments, *climactic moments of luxury* are considered luxuries because they break the present continuity of everyday life. However, unlike interrupting moments, they involve a high degree of contrast to everyday life, as they contain some sort of once-in-a-lifetime, dream-come-true, or bucket-list culminations that consumers expect never to experience ever again, such as having a unique experience in a desert, as one of our participants recounted. Therefore, as Fig. 1 illustrates, interrupting and climactic moments of luxury are at opposite ends with regard to their ability to create contrast to everyday life.

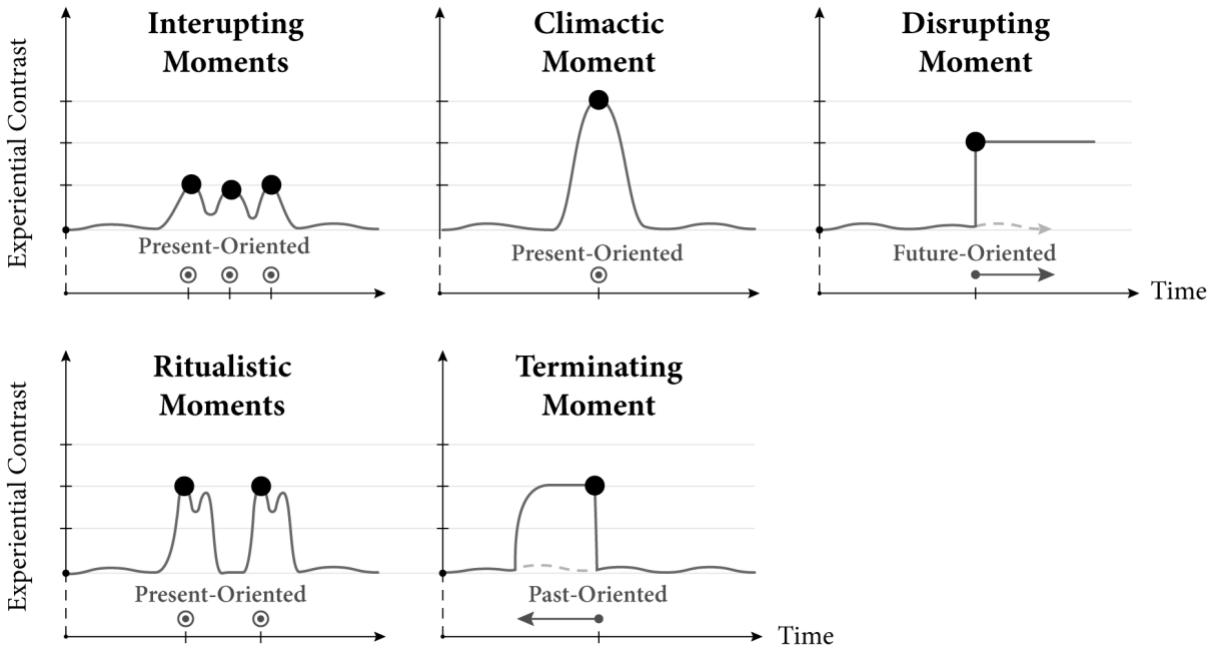
Fig.1. Types of luxury moments according to temporal focus and contrast to everyday life.



Disrupting moments of luxury disrupt everyday life and consequently create a "before" and "after" that are different from each other. As such, their temporal focus is on the future because they may constitute the beginning of a new period in life, such as giving birth to a child. *Ritualistic moments of luxury* are perceived as luxuries because they emerge from a re-occurring sequence of precious events that contrast with everyday life, such as setting the table for family get-togethers. These moments focus on the here and now but are narratively suspended between past and present. Finally, *terminating moments of luxury* are perceived as luxuries because they constitute points in time that terminate a particularly significant experience that contrasts with everyday life. Their temporal focus is on the past in an at-times bittersweet realization that something special has come to an end. Fig. 2 further illustrates how consumers experience these different moments of luxury within a consumption episode. The baseline indicates profane everyday experiences. Experiences of luxury create different experiential contrasts to profane everyday life, as indicated by the various curves setting the

experience apart from the everyday baseline. The bold dots indicate the moment of luxury—that is, the moment that participants singled out as a vantage point from which to evaluate and anchor these experiences.

Fig. 2. Moments of luxury embedded in consumption episodes.



Furthermore, the five moments of luxury share experiential qualities ascribed to them by our participants. It is these experiential qualities that set moments of luxury apart from and create contrast to everyday life. As we show subsequently, it is also these shared qualities that set moments of luxury apart from, for example, moments of pleasure that do not share all these experiential qualities. While all moments of luxury are pleasurable (some bittersweet), not all pleasurable moments are moments of luxury, as they lack the other experiential qualities. For example, most people perceive all moments of luxury as being relatively scarce (and some even as being very scarce). Most everyday pleasures lack that quality. The same is true for other experiential qualities that characterize all moments of luxury. The majority of

these qualities fall into six different categories: being freeing, happy, perfect, scarce, caring, and exciting. While all moments of luxury share these qualities, some qualities are especially significant for how specific moments are experienced, as Table 1 outlines.

Table 1. Experiential qualities of different moments of luxury

Qualities/ Moments	*Freeing from* (offer liberation from obstacles and constraints)	*Freeing to* (give opportunity for self-actualization)	*Happy* (meaningful and pleasureable)	*Perfect* (beautiful and spotless)	*Scarce* (precious and rare)	*Caring* (connecting and full of love)	*Exciting* (liminal and energetic)
Interrupting							
Climactic							
Disrupting							
Ritualistic							
Terminating							

All types of luxury moments share experiential qualities. Those qualities that are highly emphasized for the specific type of moment are marked with a darker shade of gray.

4.1. Qualities of interrupting luxury moments

Interrupting luxury moments occur in the context of vacations and trips, but they also constitute the spice of everyday life. The metaphors participants frequently used to describe the actual or imagined oscillation between spaces (Hemetsberger et al., 2012) supported by interrupting moments include “like a different world,” “like being on vacation,” “like in a movie,” “like a dream,” and “like heaven or paradise,” and they compared these moments to being on a “flying carpet,” having “wings,” and flying like a “bird.” These moments do not need to be luxurious in the traditional sense of being expensive or scarce and consequently can be based on “little” rather than “big” luxuries. As AT8 (female, age 25) described:

> “To me, this special moment is like being on vacation. When I am at the lake, which I am very often, I feel like being in the South, like on vacation, it is exceptionally beautiful.”

In this vein, our participants can experience rather mundane activities as a luxurious break from everyday life—for example, having free time in a library, buying Starbucks coffee, having time to take pictures of their dog, buying and reading hard-copy books, being able to socialize in a large backyard, enjoying free time with gadgets and electronics, choosing a movie from streaming services, being in the park close to the dorm, taking the dogs to the forest and playing with them, taking animal photos with a friend, being pampered by Grandmother, being able to use a smart phone, visiting specialty grocery shops, having a well-stocked fridge when visiting childhood home, or going to the hairdresser. Furthermore, several of these moments occur on a repeated basis, though they are not ingrained in a set of consumption rituals, such as when participants perceive skiing in a nearby area as a moment of luxury.

One of the main qualities of Interrupting luxury moments is that they provide participants with freedom. The concept of freedom is based on two notions of liberty (Varman & Vikas, 2007): negative liberty or "freedom from," which involves the liberation from obstacles and constraints (Fromm, 1941; Hayek, 1944), and positive liberty or "freedom to," in which the socially embedded self is licensed to seek self-actualization (Green, 1906). Prior research establishes a link between freedom and luxury (Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Llamas, 2015). According to Llamas (2015), it is the craving for and scarcity of freedom in everyday life that renders it a luxury.

Our interviewees described the quality of "freedom from" in abstract ways but also in more concrete ways. Abstract ways of depicting "freedom from" include being freed, having a free head, having a time-out, and being able to unwind. Here, interviewees did not necessarily clearly state what it is that they unwind from or what would otherwise preoccupy them. For example, AT2 (male, age 26) said:

> "Being able to sit on the couch and to turn on [an Amazon movie on television] without having to turn on my notebook, that's a moment of luxury to me. It is so easy: sit down, turn on, and there you go."

However, "freedom from" can also be linked to concrete things that can be left behind. For example, AT4 (female, age 34) described her moment on a sunbed during her vacation as follows:

> "I was able to be like I am in the summer. You have a certain ease or you can be … like I probably cannot be in everyday life where I have to plan and where I have appointments, things to do ... and I have to do this and that and … well. […] I was able to just live in the moment. It was totally easy and carefree and without any worries. Yes, just without any worries."

In this vein, and similar to prior research (Llamas, 2015), our interviewees linked luxury to being freed from "pressures, schedules, deadlines, stress, from cultural and social constraints, from routines, banal chores, offices, economic restrictions, and sources of authority" (p. 98). They also mentioned freedom from other distractions, such as the gaze of other people, having to think, having people or noisy children around, or being in the city.

The quality of "freedom to," which involves the quest for self-actualization (Green, 1906), also surfaced extensively in the participants' descriptions of interrupting luxury moments. This is an expression revealing that interrupting luxury moments constitute not only a break from everyday life but also an opportunity for self-actualization:

> "I wouldn't say anything about a bouldering gym is what you would call traditionally luxurious. There's a lot of chalk everywhere, it's very rough and, uh, everyone's in bare feet—so kind of the opposite of luxury. But uhm, maybe that's what made it so luxurious. I think it was just the fact that you're able to have a hobby. That's kind of what made it a luxury." (CA3, male, age 24)

As this quote illustrates, participants described this quality as one of the key components of interrupting moments of luxury, whether they referred to a hobby, time, goods, services, facilities, or consumption at large. Notably, sometimes material objects become a luxury not only because of their economic value but also because the person has the resources to enjoy them. As CA6 (male, age 27) described:

> "The fact that I already kind of own like another, more practical vehicle makes owning a motorcycle feel luxurious to me. Um, very few people have one, it brings me a lot of enjoyment to be able to ride it. And even so it's not just the fact that I own it, but also having the time to ride it, is a luxury."

Freedom of choice, as described previously, and social connection are closely linked to happiness and well-being (Baumann, 1988; Harvey & Pauwels, 2011). In this vein, interviewees also linked "freedom" with eudaimonic and hedonic happiness (Huppert & Linley, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001). The Aristotelian concept of eudaimonia, related to personal growth and a meaningful life, emerged in interviewees' narratives of interrupting moments as accomplishment, balance, gratefulness, and the opportunity to be "themselves." Hedonic happiness, which refers back to Aristippus and describes a sensual and pleasurable life, emerged in narratives of fun and good times:

> "It made me feel grateful just because it was the six of us, surrounded by friends, drinking and laughing, just having a really good time together. Umm, it was just, yeah one of those moments where you're having so much fun and you just take a step back and it's "Wow! This is just, this is really cool, I love this." (CA10, female, age 24)

As this quote illustrates, participants often ascribed hedonic and eudaimonic qualities to the same moments, which sometimes stand out and provide happiness precisely because they are social. This is also reflected in participants' use of metaphors related to personal

relationships, such as “like home,” which underscores the natural quality of being social in interrupting moments of luxury. A beautiful but unshared sunset is not quite as wonderful.

In summary, interrupting moments of luxury clearly draw on meanings of luxury beyond those found in traditional conceptualizations of luxury (Fisher, 1998; Gardner, 1983; Jauregui, 2007). Their preciousness lies in their contrast to everyday life and is based on feelings of freedom, happiness, and sociality. Thus, no matter how small these interrupting moments of luxury seem to be, they are more than small moments of pleasure that weave barely noticeable into the narrative thread of everyday life.

4.2. Qualities of climactic luxury moments

Similar to interrupting moments, people perceive climactic moments as luxuries because they break the continuity of everyday life. However, unlike interrupting moments, they contain some sort of “once-in-a-lifetime,” “unique,” “dream-come-true,” or “bucket-list” tag that consumers never expect to experience ever again. The participants mainly described climactic moments of luxury as being scarce and perfect. Although they are scarce—which aligns with traditional concepts of luxury—the scarcity of climactic moments primarily emanates from their preciousness rather than their materialistic value. AT13’s (female, age 26) moment of luxury, crawling out of a tent after an overnight stay in the desert, describes this quite well:

> “The moment when you crawl out of your tent in the morning and it is still freezing cold, you see the sun raising in the middle of the desert and nothing else, that was a moment that really stuck.… Especially the fact that there was no luxury, none, absolutely zero. Not luxury, because I had an awesome bed or a good night sleep, but because it was such a unique experience […] To me luxury moments are moments that are extraordinary, moments that I cannot reconstruct, moments that I like to talk about

and that I look back upon. If I think I have done something awesome, when something culminates after a long time that you have been working towards that moment, but you cannot directly plan the moment."

As the quote illustrates, participants attribute the quality of scarcity to climactic moments of luxury, not because they are necessarily based on the consumption of expensive or out-of-reach consumer goods but because they are unexpected and a "dream come true." Adapting principles of commodity theory (i.e., the link between [un]availability and perceived value; Lynn, 1991) to personal experiences, we find that scarcity adds value to climactic moments because they are unlikely to be replicated:

> "Right under you dolphins jump up from the water, and in the evening you see how the green plankton radiates when you sail through it. Much better than any luxury when you see something like that […] It was the greatest feeling of all. I've never known anything like that. Green plankton. You know when it is pitch black in the evening and then the water radiates green. That is a super-luxury. Much better than living in a luxurious mansion." (AT3, male, age 28)

To this participant, nature is a source for multiple climactic moments even in less exotic environments. For example, a particular sunset remains unforgettable: "They are the fastest sunsets in the world. Different from what we know. You can watch the sun go down." To AT3, these rare encounters in nature are different from what he has experienced previously and what he expects to experience in the future, and thus they are also scarce (Canniford & Shankar, 2013).

As these quotes illustrate, climactic moments share some features of Maslow's (1971) concept of peak moments, especially in terms of an immersion and fascination with the here and now detached from time and place, the disappearance of fears, and the narrowing of consciousness, in which people are freed from distractions and duties of everyday life and are

able to be courageous and realize their authentic selves. In this vein, metaphors referring to a state of bliss, such as "like a drug/ecstasy" or "like an orgasm," and metaphors referring to an elevation of some kind, such as "like a bird," "like a celebrity," "like an emperor/empress," or "like god," implicate the fusion with the world that participants experience during those moments. By contrast, climactic moments of luxury do not fully align with Maslow's (1971) concept of "creative attitude"—that is, spontaneity, innocence, giving up past and future, and the loss of ego. For example, a future outlook and an anchoring in the past are both ingrained in many of the descriptions of climactic moments, as many of these moments are on bucket lists or pinnacles of dreams for the future. An observing ego realizes that the dream has come true while being (almost) fully immersed in it. This surfaced in interviewees' accounts when they depicted these climactic moments of luxury as perfect.

The participants often described the quality of perfection as an immaculate state in which nothing is supposed to be any different than this:

> "[To me, this moment meant] freedom, fulfillment of my dreams – because I love travelling – and in this moment I just had everything that I needed. I didn't need anything else that could have improved it. It was simply perfect, just the way it was." (AT11, female, age 23)

In addition, the participants often described perfection in terms of beauty ascribed to the surrounding environment. Beauty was often ascribed to nature: "the water was one of the cleanest streams I have ever seen.… This is marvelous, so beautiful and the colors were so intense" (AT3, male, age 28). Sometimes, however, the same was true for buildings and objects. For example, CA7 (female, age 21) was amazed by a European museum: "I don't think I ever imagined I'd see statues so beautifully carved and the ceiling so beautifully done and everything. It was just something out of out of a book or movie. But it was real!"

In summary, climactic moments of luxury are scarce and perfect culminations that stand in sharp contrast to everyday life. They are experiential "diamonds," as their scarcity and perfection are based on experiential preciousness rather than economic preciousness of a scarce and perfectly cut diamond.

4.3. Qualities of disrupting luxury moments

The interviewees perceived disrupting moments as luxuries because they break the continuity of everyday life in a rather drastic way, involving transformative experiences (Mick, 2006; Sussan, Hall, & Meamber, 2012) and inducing longer-lasting life changes. In many instances, disrupting moments occur during major life transitions, that is, periods during a life path that involve role changes and self-alterations (Mathur, Moschis, & Lee, 2003; Van Gennep, 1960). The participants reported disrupting moments in the context of transitions to adulthood, independence, marital life, parenthood, and new educational or profession pathways. For example, DK8 (male, age 20) described a disrupting luxury moment in the transition to adulthood as follows:

> "Yeah, it's my youngest brother's tenth birthday. […] It means more than just the usual birthday because, …it was the first birthday where I didn't live at my parents' house. So, it's I think, that's the special thing about this experience. Because it's not something extraordinary, it's just a family dinner, but […] it made me realize now you are an adult, something has changed."

Some of these moments are framed as initiating a new period in life due to their life-changing character; for example, CA2 (female, age 27) brought a picture of her daughter the day after she was born: "Complete happiness and joy, like this was just a great memory, a great start."

However, disrupting moments are not necessarily related to once-in-a-lifetime events such as marriage or childbirth (McTaggart, 1908) but can occur in very mundane contexts

that foster deep self-experiences and self-realization, such as during a walk in the forest with family:

> "This is from my hometown or from where I grew up. So this is my family. And, this is something we do whenever we are together. Always going for a walk and this day I came home to visit them from Budapest. […] It was very stressful in Budapest and coming home to this was making me feel very calm and relaxed and being around my parents and my sister. They could always tell me that everything is going to be good. […] They made me believe that I could take care of myself. So that I didn't have to depend on anyone else." (DK3, female, age 28)

Disrupting luxury moments are strongly associated with the quality of excitement. As a gate to a different life, these moments offer liminality and, therefore, seedbeds of change (Turner, 1974). In this vein, by definition, disruptive luxury moments constitute a before and after in the life narrative of our participants, with a positive outlook on the disruption and what is yet to come. The moment itself—not just the outlook—is pregnant with energy. In Turner's (1974, p. 75) words, it constitutes "an interval, however brief, of '*margin*' or '*limen*,' when the past is momentarily negated, suspended, or abrogated, and the future has not yet begun. There is an instant of pure potentiality when everything trembles in the balance." Consequently, change and excitement emanate from these moments. In addition, they are often narratively couched in the happiness and loving care experienced in the disruptive moment and the envisioned future. In line with this, these moments metaphorically allude to dreams and states of elevation in participants' accounts. Many of these disrupting moments are not experienced in isolation but involve family, friends, or other close acquaintances. In this vein, CA1 (male, age 29) described a specific moment during his wedding day:

"We were holding hands. And facing down right below us are some vineyards and it faces onto a backdrop of a valley side. […] Very happy. Sunny. Beautiful weather. Everyone was happy. We had just gotten married so very exciting feeling. […] There is nothing really comparable to that moment, right? It's the moment I got to say yes to my wife and she said yes to me and we were tied together from that point on. So it's hard to really compare that to anything else."

The excerpt illustrates how the happiness and loving care experienced during disrupting moments contribute to the luxury that participants experience. The moment mirrors the figure-ground relationship between bonding communitas and structure (Turner, 1974). While the structures of everyday life vanish into the background in these brief moments of luxury, communitas blossoms in the foreground.

4.4. Qualities of ritualistic luxury moments

Ritualistic moments are perceived as luxuries because they constitute a re-occurring sequence of precious events. Rituals are a set of repeated behaviors that include ritualistic artifacts, scripts, roles, and audience (Rook, 1985). Sometimes, the entire ritualistic experience can be singled out as a recurrent moment of luxury, while at other times only parts of the rituals constitute moments of luxury, such as 'unveiling' a decorated Christmas tree. These moments are primarily attributed to the qualities of loving care and freedom—especially freedom from the requirements of everyday life. They emerge from events such as Christmas-time and birthday rituals and family get-togethers (Lowrey & Otnes, 2003; Otnes & McGrath, 1994), but can also include recurrent end-of-the-week visits to the dry cleaner:

"To me luxury begins in the moment where I leave my dirty clothes at the dry cleaner. Then I know that I will not have to deal with it myself and can think about other things

that I prefer to do instead of washing and ironing during weekends." (AT2, male, age 26)

From a traditional perspective on luxury, we would expect luxurious artifacts to play a major role in these ritualistic moments of luxury (e.g., Purbrick, 2007) or to be displays of abundance (Wallendorf & Arnould, 1991). In this vein, Wallendorf and Arnould (1991, p. 13) state that during Thanksgiving "not just a moment of bounty but a culture of enduring abundance is celebrated." While abundance surfaces in some accounts of, for example, Christmas, the artifacts in most of the rituals singled out are relatively modest and mundane (i.e., pants, underwear, gifts, food, drinks, transformer figures), while the love devoted to the enactment of the script takes center stage in most of the narratives. The following account illustrates the loving care experienced in such moments:

> "Well, this picture. Other people just see a set table. Maybe you could even decorate it more beautifully, that that's … I know that my mother has set the table with dear napkins, early in the morning while we are still asleep. And she makes a tea with herbs that she has collected in the meadow. And the honey that her bees have made. And that she quickly stepped outside to get some spruce branches. So, this love that she devotes to setting the breakfast table. And then one after the other gets up at different hours and joins the table. Usually it is mum and me and then Sebastian joins, and then my two sleepyhead brothers arrive. So, the table fills up little by little and when I look at that, then I feel extremely fine. I can hear our talks, I smell the tea and the fresh rolls from the oven and to me that is absolute relaxation." (AT4, female, age 34)

To AT4, not only being in the moment but also reminiscing about this moment allows her to feel like "a young girl" again, not having to "worry about a thing." Consequently, through nostalgic reminiscence of a past event, consumers can tap into experiences of "freedom from" (Fromm, 1941; Hayek, 1944; Llamas, 2015) that contrast with the hassles of everyday life. In

this sense, through the nostalgic quality of the experience, the past event is relevant to the present experience in addition to being a positive autobiographical recollection (Lasaleta, Sedikides, & Vohs, 2014; Stephan et al., 2012).

4.5. Qualities of terminating luxury moments

Terminating moments draw their significance from creating scarcity as the experience comes to an end and, due to their specific temporal outlook, when they conclude a luxury experience in a way that augments the experience. For example, AT2 (male, age 26) described visiting a hot springs spa next to the airport in Iceland during transit after a great vacation:

> "It was different, much more luxurious. So unusual. So special that you can go there—right next to the airport—before departure. And that you are able to completely pass the trip in review. Slowing down. Creating memories in which the entire ambiance flows through once more and consequently is enhanced and lifted up to a higher level."

As AT2 explains, terminating moments offer a vantage point from which people can take in the past luxury experience in its entirety, as this is where it comes to an end. Nothing lasts, and consequently the quality of scarcity frequently surfaces in descriptions of terminating moments of luxury. Contrary to Fredrickson's (2000) speculations, such end moments carry special personal meaning not only when they are goal-driven but also when they enhance mindfulness of the entire experience.

Two narrative threads described in terminating moments add to their ability to augment the luxury experience. The first is a narrative of achievement, in which the narrative peaks at the terminating moment. This was the case when one of our participants brought home the Vespa that he has been repairing and working on for nine months:

> "The day when it is done and you can finally take it home. The shrine, the baby that belongs to you and really is yours and no longer in someone else's garage. Instead it is in your garage at your home. It is probably like taking your baby home from the hospital upon delivery." (AT6, male, age 28)

The second narrative thread is that of closure, in which the peaks of the narrative typically lie within the preceding experience, such as the moment of reminiscence on the last day of a vacation:

> "It was the end of a great five-week vacation with a really good friend of mine. […] My friend wasn't there and I was just strolling around. I thought I'd sit down and have a drink and just unwind, look and enjoy. Looking at the people passing by … I like that, just looking a bit and seeing what's going on. That was the moment, where I was able to look back on everything that I experienced." (AT10, male, age 28)

When participants singled out terminating moments as moments of luxury, they were consequently symbolically charged by the preceding events. In this case, the hard labor, time, and money fed into the repair of AT6's Vespa are significant for the moment he experiences as luxury. In addition, this event during AT10's long vacation marks the last days of the vacation with special significance. In both cases, something good comes to an end, which in itself may add value if we adapt principles of scarcity and commodity theory (i.e., the link between [un]availability and perceived value) to these moments of luxury (Lynn, 1991).

5. Discussion

In traditional terms, research has characterized luxury as functional characteristics produced as means for social distinction (e.g., Han et al., 2010), such as high price, outstanding quality, uniqueness/scarcity, superfluity, and the aesthetics of luxury goods and brands (e.g., Keller, 2009). While our findings are in accord with these circumscriptions on a

general level, in many cases our study finds that luxury moments are meaningful and precious instances characterizing experiences of luxury that go way beyond these attributions. Our findings regarding luxury moments help show what it is that makes consumer experiences luxurious.

5.1. Reflections on main findings

This study sheds light on the very nature of moments of luxury and their contrasting experiential qualities that set them apart from everyday life. It sets a counterpoint to more traditional managerial perspectives by offering a new, unconventional slant on luxury and introducing the notion of the moment to describe the experiential essence of luxury. First, we find that luxury involves certain temporal foci that determine the type of luxury moment, whether it is interrupting, climactic, disrupting, ritualistic, or terminating, where each type influences the quality of the lived moment. The concept of the moment helps explain the deep impact of luxuriousness on the consumer life in flux. Next to the momentousness of climactic moments, which share some aspects of peak experiences (Goldstein, 2007; Maslow, 1971)—ephemeral yet powerful and potentially transformational experiences (Schouten, McAlexander, & Koenig, 2007)—disrupting and terminating moments meaningfully define and accompany consumers' life course and phases of transition. By contrast, ritualistic moments help stabilize, structure, and elevate everydayness with recurrent pleasures of life. Luxury moments—small or big ones—act as powerful symbols of living and advancement in the form of little exhilarating instances that interrupt and contrast the profanity of everyday life. Therefore, even those moments of luxury that create only small contrasts to everyday life (i.e., interrupting moments of luxury) are more than just moments of pleasure, even though all moments of luxury are experienced as pleasurable in some respect. Moments of luxury single out the freeing, happy, perfect, scarce, caring, and exciting moments in people's lives.

In this sense, the contrasting quality of luxury moments is in accord with the concept of *Kairos* that imbues life with preciousness, measured in moments and pregnant with chance and change.

Complementing recent research on luxury moments (Bauer et al., 2011; Holmqvist et al., 2015), which finds that luxuriousness is embedded in the little luxuries or enjoyments that enable some temporal escapism from the everyday mundane life, we add a temporal outlook of moments—interrupting, climactic, disrupting, ritualistic, and terminating—realizing that the momentary escape is suspended between the past, present, and future. As such, luxury moments are transient and fluid (Hemetsberger et al., 2012), emphasizing the ephemeral character of post-modern definitions of luxury (Berthon, Pitt, Parent, & Berthon, 2009) but also anchored in the chronology of personal life narratives.

Second, we find that the liquidity and ephemerality of the moment render luxury precious, scarce, and extraordinary. In their typology of luxury brands, Berthon et al. (2009, p. 53) distinguish classic, conspicuous, enduring, and monumental luxury from the transient and ephemeral, which "is centered on transience—where the impermanence, incompleteness, and imperfection of life is raised to the highest form of art." Our study provides empirical evidence for the meaningfulness of ephemerality in luxury consumption, though it not only is related to art or the art of living but also includes several qualities of precious moments. Luxury moments become meaningful and unique as they unfold their escapist and unlocking power to interrupt and re-energize people's fast-paced and demanding lives (Bauer et al., 2011; Myerson, 2012). Even if consumers tie luxury to materialistic goods—the sports car, the vacation destination—luxuriousness unfolds in the very moment when they feel free, alive, and reconnected with nature and humankind. The liquidity of luxury moments renders luxury less materialistic, more self- than brand-related, more prosumptive, and more private (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017; Bauer et al., 2011). This, however, is not the same as our focus on

small moments of luxury within the fabric of daily life. We find luxury in being free to walk the dog, going to the hairdresser in times of stress, or even in enjoying the minimalism of reduced consumption. Luxury moments can also emerge from reveling in sociality and familial bonds, the exceptional vacation location, a once-in-a-lifetime adventure, or a great achievement. Liquid luxury, here, is not a stylized practice but a form of existential mindfulness, a form of liminality (Turner, 1974) in the sense of temporary escapism from social structures ("escape from"; Cova, Carù, & Cayla, 2018) or flow experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008) that free consumers from profanity and everydayness ("escape into"; Cova et al., 2018). Unlike flow, which is most likely to be achieved when challenges match skill levels (Csikszentmihalyi, 2008), moments of luxury seldom involve any degree of either challenge or skill. Rather, luxury moments are personal, are idiosyncratic, and could be anything as long as they carry certain experiential qualities in the eyes of the beholder. Therefore, although every moment could potentially become a moment of luxury, not every moment is a moment of luxury.

Third, related to metaphysical aspects of luxury moments, our study shows that luxury, as experienced, underscores fundamental qualities of human existence and life. Luxury moments share common metaphysical qualities that resonate with and extend prior works, such as those on peak experiences (Maslow, 1971), meaningful and extraordinary experiences (Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019; Scott et al., 2017), and happiness and well-being (Bauer, McAdams, & Pals, 2008; Csikszentmihalyi, 2008; Gabb & Fink, 2015; Huppert & Linley, 2011; Ryan & Deci, 2001). In essence, luxury can be expressed in four main themes that relate the deep moment of experienced luxuriousness, its temporality, and its quality to the consumer self: *growth and advancement*, *bliss and Eudaimonia*, *unity with the other*, and *awe and self-transcendence*. These themes cut across moments and might accumulate in extraordinary peak moments. Yet their quality is also visible in little blissful moments—

moments in which individuals catch a glimpse of the beauty of the universe in a little flower or moments of awe in front of a wonderful painting. Growth and advancement result from practices individuals engage in and challenges they meet, which reward them with deep contention and satisfaction. They are based on the freeing quality of moments, such as "freeing" from the constraints of modern life and being "free to" do what people aspire to do (see Cova et al., 2018). The temporality and effortful character of these moments imbues them with special meaning (e.g., Husemann & Eckhardt, 2019; Scott et al., 2017; Woermann & Rokka, 2015) and renders them exclusive, as not everyone can achieve these states (Holmqvist et al., 2015).

While growth and advancement result from personal investments and achievements, bliss and Eudaimonia are "gifts of life," lucky and happy moments, and perfect states of being (Huppert & Linley, 2011). As blissful moments often come as a surprise, they are experienced as little lucky moments, while Eudaimonia as a philosophical concept is an achievement, a virtue, related to personal growth (Bauer et al., 2008) that enhances an individual's overall well-being. Those moments of eudaimonic well-being and happiness, enjoyment, indulgence, and excitement are the "spice of life" and produce deep feelings of gratitude and thankfulness.

Many of the meaningful moments our participants described have their roots in (re-)connection and (re-)union with "the other" in all its varieties. Connection with other people and love and affection provide fertile ground for the most intense emotional luxury moments in individuals' lives, with the moments defined by their intense unifying character, feelings of love and care, and social bonding (Hemetsberger et al., 2012). Similarly, deeply felt connections with nature, objects, or humankind that result from increased mindfulness are experienced as moments of luxury, similar to and corroborating prior findings on the cultivation of "sacred moments" (Goldstein, 2007). Such cultivated forms of mindful

moments seem to have an immanent spiritual or philanthropic character (Goldstein, 2007; Hemetsberger et al., 2012; Llamas & Thomsen, 2016) that potentially transforms consumers' selves into a more desired form.

From these mindful moments, feelings of awe and self-transcendence might result as an intense form of connection. Dream-like experiences of wonder and overwhelming emotions induce awe and speechlessness, resembling how Yaden et al. (2016) describe the experience of viewing the earth from space or how our participants describe their most extreme experiences with the power of nature. This mindful state and transformative experience result in an "overview" effect (Yaden et al., 2016) that connects individuals deeply with the universe and humankind and eventually sustainably alters their worldview.

In post-modern and liquid times of global nomadism, technological advancements, global warming, rising urbanism, and increasing economic precarity, moments of luxury provide many possibilities to induce luxuriousness into people's lives that differ dramatically from "populuxe" luxuries for the masses that often render luxuriousness profane, uninspiring, and un-enchanting; they also help people escape the hedonic treadmill (Brickman & Campbell, 1971) that quickly turns extraordinariness back to normal. Instead, their ephemeral, liquid character raises preciousness as they are scarce and provide, for example, less affluent consumers with luxury moments that are commonly reserved for the more privileged. The rare moment of a blooming flower might qualify as a luxury moment for everyone, if they are mindful about it. In this regard, this study provides a new, unconventional, and fresh look at the concept of luxury from a grounded theory perspective that is phenomenon-driven (Belk & Sobh, 2019). We find that luxuriousness manifests itself in personally meaningful moments of mindfulness and temporary escape from hedonic adaptation, such as when someone stops merely walking past nature and is suddenly struck by its profound magnificence (Brickman & Campbell, 1971). Luxuriousness provides an

essential view of luxury that is context-independent and independent of its particular source—be it a product, experience, or practice—which also has essential implications for management.

5.2. Managerial implications

All managers, not only those of luxury companies and brands, will find important implications in this study for the development, staging, and promotion of (luxury) products and experiences at important touchpoints. Our study suggests that luxury becomes luxurious when it engenders luxury moments in consumers. Luxurious moments unfold when mundane everyday life is interrupted or disrupted or when climactic, ritualized, or terminating moments occur. Managers could trigger or accompany such freeing, happy, perfect, scarce, caring, and exciting moments in the lives of their consumers by, for example, enriching luxury goods and services with opportunities for growth and advancement and enabling blissful and eudaimonic experiences, unity with the other, and awe and self-transcendence. Whether featuring these themes in communication and events; providing opportunities for growth and advancements with competitions and challenges; offering guided tours and adventures related to nature and important life events of consumers; providing bliss through little, silent moments; or inducing awe through the sublimities of nature, cities, adventure parks, the universe, and countries, the possibilities for luxury brands are endless and can be tightly connected with the brand essence.

The uniting element of luxury moments is their capacity to create meaningful breaks. They interrupt the profanity of everyday life; disrupt its continuity; ritualistically change its consecutive, structured, and monotonous character; or endow people with climactic moments or meaningful closures for exceptional experiences. Our study provides managers with multiple examples for creating moments in which consumers can anchor their luxury

experience. Knowing that dining with friends can provide consumers with meaningful interrupting moments, for example, might inspire grocery stores or farmers markets to provide a fully equipped kitchen space for rent in the evening or groceries and recipes for a fun cooking experience with friends or colleagues. Ritualistic moments can be fostered by bundling products with common ritualistic practices—for example, books with tea bags and a little poem related to moment qualities such as freedom, in which the poem acts as a reflective pause in the flow of everyday life. Disruptive moments are created through a "before" and "after." Take, for example, an experiential hallway in a hotel where guests passing through are met by special lightening, scent, sound, and poetry that can have a transformational effect on their current state of mind. Or creating magical, climactic moments with surprising, theatrical productions or space for deceleration and retreat in nature. Or even creating a terminating experience for customers after visiting a silent retreat, such as a closing ritual that invites them to take a moment of self-gratitude by thanking themselves for their accomplishment.

An emphasis on moments of luxury might change a marketer's perspective entirely. More radically, thinking in terms of luxury moments implies different strategizing, segmenting, and positioning that is oriented not only on precious objects and aesthetic experiences but also on defining moments of luxury that occur during the customer journey. This is not trivial, though, as new strategies often imply a radically individualized and personalized approach and well-trained staff to discern these singularized moments. For example, a bookstore could become a place of imagination and fantasy, which implies a radically different concept for store layout (e.g., having different rooms for experiencing different fantastic stories) and a staff that is trained to investigate consumers' imaginative worlds instead of simply suggesting books.

Furthermore, new and unconventional luxury consumers (e.g., global nomads) increasingly "travel light"—consume liquidly (Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017)—and no longer invest in traditional luxury but instead rent, share, or invest in great experiences as well as little, highly meaningful moments. Such moments are becoming increasingly relevant for all consumers. Even in the case of "traditional" luxuries, it is these moments that count (e.g., the public gaze, the compliment of a dress, the adrenalin boost when standing on top of a mountain, the joy of unwrapping precious objects and gifts). While affluent consumers might suffer from the hedonic treadmill and become bored with even the most expensive dress in their wardrobe or sports car in their garage, they will probably never forget the time they wore the gown on their wedding day or drove their convertible to Tuscany. These luxury moments are not much different from the fresh scent of a rose inhaled after a long winter, which makes everyone gratefully utter: "Thank you for the moment."

Appendix: Sample characteristics

#	Name	Age	Gender	Nationality	Civil State	Education	Occupation
1	CA1	29	Male	Canada	Married	College	Oil plant operator
2	CA2	27	Female	Canada	Relationship	University	Teamster
3	CA3	24	Male	Canada	Single	University	Law student
4	CA4	23	Female	Canada	Relationship	University	Registered nurse
5	CA5	29	Male	Canada	Single	University	Business system officer
6	CA6	27	Male	Canada	Relationship	University	Student
7	CA7	21	Female	Canada	Single	High school	Sales associate
8	CA8	24	Female	Canada	Single	University	Student
9	CA9	24	Male	Canada	Single	University	Mgt. consultant
10	CA10	24	Female	Canada	Single	University	Accountant
11	AT1	27	Female	Austria	Relationship	High school	Self-employed
12	AT2	26	Male	Austria	Single	University	Tax consultant
13	AT3	28	Male	Austria	Relationship	Apprentice-ship	Technician
14	AT4	34	Female	Austria	Relationship	High school	PR manager
15	AT5	31	Male	Austria	Single	High school	Technician
16	AT6	28	Male	Austria	Relationship	University	Student
17	AT7	26	Female	Germany	Single	University	Student
18	AT8	25	Female	Austria	Single	High school	Kinder-garten teacher
19	AT9	33	Male	Austria	Relationship	High school	Self-employed
20	AT10	28	Male	Austria	single	Apprentice-ship	Technician
21	AT11	23	Female	Austria	Relationship	High school	Student
22	AT12	25	Female	Austria	Single	High school	Student
23	AT13	26	Female	Austria	Relationship	Apprentice-ship	Maternity leave
24	AT14	34	Male	Austria	Relationship	Apprentice-ship	Engineer
25	DK1	25	Male	Denmark	Single	University	Consultant
26	DK2	27	Male	Denmark	Single	University	Tax consultant
27	DK3	28	Female	Denmark	Single	University	Senior consultant

28	DK4	25	Male	Denmark	Relationship	University	Tax consultant
29	DK5	28	Female	Denmark	Single	University	Senior manager
30	DK6	26	Female	Denmark	Relationship	University	Consultant
31	DK7	32	Male	Denmark	Relationship	University	Marketing consultant
32	DK8	20	Male	Denmark	Single	High school	Student assistant
33	DK9	19	Female	Denmark	Single	High school	Assistant
34	DK10	24	Female	Denmark	Single	University	Project Manager

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