

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Wang Xiu

Arjun Awasthi 00:01

So basically, this interview is, I just am interested to understand, what are your ideas about certain luxury fashion products, and what is your concept, concept of why you would buy certain things. And so as I go along the interview, just feel free to answer the specific questions. And then I'll also come to a point where I'll give you a definition and then ask questions based off of that. So just to get started, can you please tell me a little bit about yourself and your background?

Wang Xiu 00:31

Okay, my name is [Redacted], and I'm a second year PhD student in Sociology at the University of Southampton. For my background, I'm a Chinese and I came to the UK for complete my master's degree, and PhD degree, and PhD degree is still I'm working, and I think just this or something else? Oh, give me a background. I'm a 26 years old, yeah, and just this.

Arjun Awasthi 01:11

Okay, that's fine. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Wang Xiu 01:18

Yes, it is. I'm interested in the luxury fashion because I think it represents the people's taste and it's like a hobby different people have a different hobby, and I like the luxury fashion. Yeah, something else. Yes, and when I buying the luxury goods, I will feel happy, because I think people like precious, rare, and it will be in the luxury goods it's always expensive and not a lot everyone can afford it, and if I can afford it, sometimes it's sort of a self, self. How to say that? Self competence, self competence, right?

Arjun Awasthi 02:25

Competence or confidence? Which one do you?

Wang Xiu 02:29

Not confident. Competence, okay, self competence, or like the self worth.

Arjun Awasthi 02:34

Self worth, okay,

Wang Xiu 02:35

Yeah, self worth. Because if this this thing, I bought it by myself. The money is from, I earned. I think I'm good. It is self evidence. And if this thing from my family, my parents bought it for me, I will proud of my family, so it's sort of a self worth.

Arjun Awasthi 03:06

Great. Thank you very much for that answer. Very insightful. So what kind of products do you buy? What kind of products or accessories do you buy?

Wang Xiu 03:14

You mean the fashion? I'm not so often, because it's expensive,

Arjun Awasthi 03:21

Right. Yes.

Wang Xiu 03:22

Yeah, so when I buy it is, sometimes I think it's like a reward by myself or and sometimes my parents will buying for me like a mink. Do you know the mink coat?

Arjun Awasthi 03:43

Mink.

Wang Xiu 03:43

Mink coat. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 03:45

So fur coat. So, Mink fur coat.

Wang Xiu 03:47

I have one coat, but I didn't take it to the UK because I think it's have a risk. When my parents buy it, my parents always say, probably it is a reputation for a social class when you go to some formal party or formal associate, it's probably unnecessary for their perspective, but from my perspective, I sort of agree with and because sometimes, recently, I cannot buy this thing by myself. This is mostly my parents they.

Arjun Awasthi 04:34

But if you were to buy something by yourself, so what type of product would it be? So you gave an example of like a mink fur coat. But if you were to buy a product, what would it be?

Wang Xiu 04:46

Fashion one probably the popular brand, like Chanel, like Dior, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 04:56

And what type of products?

Wang Xiu 05:00

I just can afford for the belt, and some small things recently, if I have the money later, probably I will buy a handbag later. But recently, no.

Arjun Awasthi 05:17

So you mentioned that bringing the mink coat here would be risky. Why do you think that?

Wang Xiu 05:23

Because I impact a lot from the news, from the abroad the news when I'm still in the China, and I think this is a positive impact of me, because when I buying this thing, or consider this thing, I have another sound from my side, probably, oh, it's not, it's not a good thing. It's have a ethics issue, because I impact from this sort of this news, this journalist, so which gave me a feeling, western country will always concern this thing. So if I probably, wear this on the street, probably some people hit me. I'm afraid.

Arjun Awasthi 06:31

But yes, that's a really, that's a very interesting answer, very insightful. I'm going to come back to that point later. I wanted to talk about so you mentioned brands like Dior and Chanel. How important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products?

Wang Xiu 06:48

Yeah, exactly, because the reputation is very important, like the Diors one years later, go or two years ago, a news from Dior. I have no idea whether you you know that is, yeah, it's that Dior copied Chinese dress. Do you know this thing?

Arjun Awasthi 07:25

I think I know what you're talking about.

Wang Xiu 07:26

Yes. So I'm, I'm no idea whether it's the correct but it's the news. Have give the Dior bad reputation. So during that time. Firstly, I'm a Chinese, so I definitely, I guess the thing and the second, I impact by this bad news, even though, if this news not related to China, related to others, it will impact me as well. So during that thing, I can give you an example. I bought a silk, silk scarf for my family, but at that time, if no this thing happened, I will consider Dior, because that's it looks very nice but because this thing, I didn't consider this.

Arjun Awasthi 08:31

I see. And again, related to that so do you consider that brand, such as Chanel, then maybe, or something else, aside from Dior, is a status symbol?

Wang Xiu 08:48

Sorry, status? oh, yes, okay. It is, I think, a social it represents a social class.

Arjun Awasthi 08:58

It represents a social class.

Wang Xiu 09:00

Yes, represents social class.

Arjun Awasthi 09:03

Okay, so do you tend to follow fashion trends? If you do, why and if you don't? Why not?

Wang Xiu 09:11

It depends whether it's a good looking because some trends I don't like, if this trends fit or suit to my aesthetic taste, I will follow it, because change probably always means a new thing. So I always like to try the new thing.

Arjun Awasthi 09:41

And how do you feel about classic style?

Wang Xiu 09:44

Yeah, classic style.

Arjun Awasthi 09:47

How would you define classic style, then?

Wang Xiu 09:51

To be honest, I more like classic style.

Arjun Awasthi 09:53

Yes, so if you could describe the classic style a little bit that would be useful. Yeah.

Wang Xiu 09:59

Uh.

Arjun Awasthi 10:01

What is classic style for you basically?

Wang Xiu 10:04

Oh, for me, like some informal one. I like the suit and propriety one looks nice. I don't like some like gangnam or the street, street fashion. I don't like street fashion.

Arjun Awasthi 10:29

So you mentioned that you obviously do own a fur coat, and then you do get these, you know, some products, and it makes you feel pride, and it helps with your self worth. So I guess the question is, if you had the chance, because you mentioned that, you know, if you get the money, you would want to get a handbag, right? So if you had the chance to obtain a luxury item, such as a handbag made from, say, exotic skin. And by exotic skin, I mean, it could be made with leather from alligator, crocodile, snake or lizard, or something like that, would you consider owning it?

Wang Xiu 11:02

Yeah, yeah, I consider owning it because I think I'm not a person really wants have just the one thing because, but I think if one day I have an opportunity to own it, why not? Because it must have a

opportunity to use it. I mean, if I have this thing already, probably I don't, I will not always use it, but I will use it in a suitable place or suitable consequences. This is what I want to say, if, like, I come to the university campus to just do the research, just in the office. I don't take, I think it's not suitable.

Arjun Awasthi 12:02

Right. So there is a time and place?

Wang Xiu 12:04

Yeah, and it depends on the people. And I will met. I will meet. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 12:14

Great. And what do you consider appealing about these products, yeah?

Wang Xiu 12:20

Oh, yeah

Arjun Awasthi 12:21

Specifically the ones that are made from the exotic skins, yeah.

Wang Xiu 12:25

I think it's because it precious and rare is not, it is uncommon. So not everyone can got it. Probably this is the most appealing thing to the people.

Arjun Awasthi 12:52

So have you you mentioned this a little bit when you were talking about why you felt it was risky bringing the fur coat to the UK. But have you ever felt conflicted about buying a luxury fashion item that's say, sourced from exotic skins?

Wang Xiu 13:08

Sorry, could you say that again?

Arjun Awasthi 13:10

Yeah, absolutely. Have you ever felt conflicted about buying a luxury fashion item sourced from exotic animals?

Wang Xiu 13:17

Exactly. I have a people, two people inside fight. But sometimes this is like people make a decision. People always conflict. One is the emotion perspective, and another one is in the rational perspective. So, so when, during I buy in this luxury thing, if I have already decided to buy it, I must suit another person to shake hand. Sometimes I use the reason is, I always eat the chicken and the beef just the sort the similar thing. I can accept it.

Arjun Awasthi 14:26

I see because you feel that your diet is non vegetarian.

Wang Xiu 14:31

Ah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:32

So then you can justify it that way, because, yeah, you are already eating meat, so ?

Wang Xiu 14:37

Exactly, it's sort of like a role of survival. Animal have a position. Human being have a position. So sometimes, just as sometimes, I don't know this opinion whether it's right, sometimes animal probably have a service to the human beings, yeah, yeah. So this is why I have the [inaudible] and the consumption existing always reasonable, because existing.

Arjun Awasthi 15:23

Existing always reasonable? Ok. So I'm going to move on to the other theme, which is I'm going to talk a little bit about how much do you know about the wildlife trade. So how do you think the exotic skins that are used to make these products are sourced? So the raw material, how do you think it's sourced?

Wang Xiu 15:45

Oh, to be honest, I have no idea the details, but I think it must have a huge conflict chain in so it is a it is legal. I think if it is illegal, people will not buy it.

Arjun Awasthi 16:10

Okay, and do you know anything about the wildlife trade? If so, what do you know?

Wang Xiu 16:18

I think no idea too much.

Arjun Awasthi 16:21

Okay, that's all right.

Wang Xiu 16:25

Is it illegal, sometimes?

Arjun Awasthi 16:28

Sometimes it can be, sometimes it can be legal as well, as you mentioned, because sometimes there can be breeding facilities that provide skins to be used, but sometimes it can be hunting or poaching. So we don't really know whether it's legal or illegal.yeah,

Wang Xiu 16:42

Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 16:43

Yeah, yeah.

Wang Xiu 16:44

So, this is why this thing has the conflict. Always have a discussion.

Arjun Awasthi 16:52

Yes, all right, I'm going to now read a definition. I think this is going to sound very familiar to you, because you already mentioned, how you feel like there are two people inside you, yeah, when you have to, when you have to purchase this. But basically this is the concept, which is known as cognitive dissonance. So cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. Based on this definition, I have a few questions. Okay, so do you experience this kind of discomfort when you buy such products? If so, how do you eliminate the discomfort? So you already mentioned that you do feel that discomfort, but how do you then?

Wang Xiu 17:48

Address this? Just as I said before I always give me, give myself a reason to buy it. I think this is the difference between sort of my, the people like me, and the other people, they pursuing, always buy this thing, or I have no idea, or they don't buy any others just buy these things,

Arjun Awasthi 17:49

Yes. Sorry, if you could say that again?

Wang Xiu 18:27

Sorry, I want to say, sorry, okay, just continue.

Arjun Awasthi 18:40

Look, I'm very curious to know when you said people like me. So how would you define yourself? What do you mean by people like me?

Wang Xiu 18:47

Oh, yeah, I always give myself a reason, like, I need this. Like, sometimes in some place, in some circumstance, I have to get it. And this thing have the value of need it, but it's different between the luxury thing and the daily life thing. It's, I think difference is the functional and the daily life just, yeah, I use it comfortable is, is is fine, the luxury one have a more value, just like the status representative social class, okay? It's just like a send the gift. I have no idea whether you send gift to others, but in China, we always give the gift. According to these people use, if this people use higher you always use Chanel, Dior, and I need to give the gift like this, even though I didn't use Chanel by myself, but I have to buy this to these people.

Arjun Awasthi 20:36

I see. So why would you do that? Is that sort of to impress the other person? Or is it because it's a custom?

Wang Xiu 20:46

Custom as well, and a like the friend or like the I think it says the respect to some people

Arjun Awasthi 20:58

Giving respect?

Wang Xiu 20:58

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 20:59

Okay, I think you have answered this. Actually, I will ask this question. I think it's an interesting question. So if you could buy, inherit or be gifted these products, would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or to others? How would you justify it? How have you justified it? For example, have you ever claimed that a product is faux or imitation when it was authentic, exotic skin?

Wang Xiu 21:31

Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 21:33

If, why or why not? Yeah. Let me know if that makes sense. If it doesn't, you can ask me anything.

Wang Xiu 21:47

Oh, I understand, if I buy it, I didn't told others to this is fake, because I think that it's the behavior represents a value, and I buy it represent I got a value. So I don't want to lie to some people if, because I want to say, if I present myself to somebody else, I will, don't buy anything. If I buy I'll say the truth. I don't need to say this is a fake I didn't do this thing before.

Arjun Awasthi 22:44

Yes, yeah, that's totally fine. I'm actually really curious to know. So you said you feel this, you you justified by saying that I need this product, right? But what are some other things about these luxury fashion products that you find attractive or appealing that helps you make your decision to buy them. Basically, are there any other considerations? If so, what are those considerations that assist your decision in buying these products.

Wang Xiu 23:30

Not very understand your question,

Arjun Awasthi 23:32

Basically, you mentioned that you know you you have you say that you need the product. That's one way of, one argument. Okay, so are, what other arguments do you give to yourself when you look at a luxury fashion product? What is it about it that other things that inform your decision to buy it or make it appealing for you to buy it? Oh, you want to use for other reasons. Yes.

Wang Xiu 24:02

Other reason. For me, I think one reason is I needed it. A second reason is it's not only have the use function, but also have have the reputation of the social class. This is the most thing and the second, oh, and the second, if I would buy it, I I will, told myself, it is just like the because we always use the calf skin and lamb skin is common in the daily goods. Just the think is similar, yeah, yeah. So it's a bit just to make myself comfortable.

Arjun Awasthi 25:02

That's very useful. Thank you. Have you faced an ethical concern when buying certain products? How were you able to overcome your moral dilemma? I think we've spoken about this but if you have anything else that you want to add about any ethical concerns you faced.

Wang Xiu 25:21

Yeah, it must exist, ethics, concern because, because the animal, and why it's called the exoxic or the rare animal, probably it will be die, I mean, the kind of they all die. So as a human, human being, we need to protect them, to protect the whole world. Yeah. So, but one thing I want to mention is law, because some, some animal, they have already have the law protection, but others, they don't have the law protection. So probably this is a criteria to the people whether can buy or whether cannot buy. So.

Arjun Awasthi 26:39

But are you aware of these laws? Do you know these laws? You just mentioned the law, right?

Wang Xiu 26:48

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 26:49

So are you aware which laws protect the animals and which laws you So you do know which animal you can buy and which you can't based on the law?

Wang Xiu 26:59

To be honest, no!

Arjun Awasthi 27:00

Yes, that was the question. Okay, so I'm going to then now shift. Thank you. That was really, really useful and insightful. But I'm going to move on to the other section. I think we have discussed question A quite a bit in the last one, you just mentioned about laws and stuff. So, I think we can move on to this one. How do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions, if at all?

Wang Xiu 27:15

I think it's not too much, because this is the similar thing. Like make, making the decision, you always have the emotional and rational, but making the decision you have to rational. So. Okay, and one thing I would like to add, for your previous question, for the law sometimes I I think it's in the market, probably it's including the law.

Arjun Awasthi 28:20

It's legal?

Wang Xiu 28:21

Yeah, it's legal, okay, yeah, and no big market, or it cannot. It must be legal, right? If it's illegal, it cannot exist. That's what I'm thinking.

Arjun Awasthi 28:42

Okay, that's very useful, all right, if you have pets. So first of all, do you have any pets, pets?

Wang Xiu 28:53

I had before.

Arjun Awasthi 28:55

Okay, so if you have pets, had pets, does having a pet companion influence your purchasing decisions.

Wang Xiu 29:03

No, because it's different.

Arjun Awasthi 29:06

How so?

Wang Xiu 29:08

Pet is pet and different.

Arjun Awasthi 29:11

Can you define what makes it different?

Wang Xiu 29:13

Because pet always the dog, cat, you cannot have a like a scare one. I mean the scare animal using the making the bag is exotic skin.

Arjun Awasthi 29:40

So what you're trying to say is, I didn't understand that word scare. What was that?

Wang Xiu 29:51

The animal, which is used to for the exotic skin. Mm, hmm, which don't always to be a pet, okay, yeah, this is my Okay,

Arjun Awasthi 30:08

okay, and why?

Wang Xiu 30:13

So that one I think, is scared, and the people.

Arjun Awasthi 30:18

Wait, so you're saying that the animals that are used for making exotic skins are scary?

Wang Xiu 30:24

Scary.

Arjun Awasthi 30:25

Okay.

Wang Xiu 30:27

Yeah, it's not a pet.

Arjun Awasthi 30:32

And what about a pet is different to them, aside from being that they're scary?

Wang Xiu 30:38

And for the pets is always the dog and the cat, and, we don't eat cat and dog or using cat's fur, no, but the exotic skin. I think it's different. It's not that so, It cannot impact me,

Arjun Awasthi 31:05

It cannot impact you?

Wang Xiu 31:06

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 31:07

So, when you talk about it's not impacting you, what do you mean? Do you mean it's not impacting you, which way?

Wang Xiu 31:14

Ah, if some people eat dog meat, no, I cannot accept this thing.

Arjun Awasthi 31:22

Okay, but why can you not accept that, but you can accept the exotic skin? I just want to know, like in detail, if you can tell me.

Wang Xiu 31:33

Yeah, because I think dog and the cat is a human being's friend. We we can touch them often in our daily life, but the exotic skin the animal is far away from my life. I just can see them, probably in the zoo, but not in the daily life. So, I think probably this is the reason why I divided.

Arjun Awasthi 32:14

That's actually a very interesting point. I want to explore that a little bit, if, say these animals that are used for making exotic skins, if they were more part of your daily life, if you say, had more interaction with them, yeah. Would that then change your opinion?

Wang Xiu 32:34

Yeah, if this animal always existing to my daily life, or it's close to my daily life, it must influence me a lot.

Arjun Awasthi 32:52

Could you explain how?

Wang Xiu 32:56

I think, this is kind of the link? Or connection, just like the relationship between the human being I know you, so I close to you or but somebody else I didn't know, probably not close to, just the same.

Arjun Awasthi 33:20

Really interesting, that's very fascinating. Okay, these are just concluding questions, but is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products made from exotic skins?

Wang Xiu 33:37

Yeah, yeah. I want to add is it's not that people who buy this skin they don't love the animal, but sometimes in a different way, perspective to explain this behavior. So sometimes people considering or concern the thing to buying this thing is they don't want others to have the different colored on this kind of people to buy anything. This is how have the stereotype. But it's like some people doing a true, real bad thing. It must have some reason. It's not mean these people it is bad or something. So we always need to explore the reason why. And they need to doing this decision.

Arjun Awasthi 35:06

So you would say that there are different levels?

Wang Xiu 35:09

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 35:10

There are different levels of how bad something is.

Wang Xiu 35:13

Yeah, some people buying this thing would probably it is the bad people they cannot consider any animals feeling they can just consider themselves selfish. But some people don't, even though they buy it.

Arjun Awasthi 35:36

Wow, that's very interesting. So basically, you're saying that you can have feelings and love for animals.

Wang Xiu 35:43

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 35:44

But then you can also buy these products?

Wang Xiu 35:48

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 35:48

Because the way that that love is it depends on the kind of animal?

Wang Xiu 35:52

Exactly, and, and probably this is a way to existing in this world. And it's like just a new recently happened in China, ah not recently is 20 years later, but recently, just public. Yes, this is like a person hurt another, hurt her class, classroom, make this person got a very serious injury. And in the end, these people died so and but at 20 years ago, under the China's atmospheres at that time, because these people. She has the background. She grandfather is one of opening up person. Okay, yeah, so, so nobody to let this person go to the jail, but but in this process, a lot of people, like the police, they have their own idea. They know what is wrong and what is bad, but sometimes they haven't they don't have the right or they cannot do anything, even though they know they think it's bad, they just follow. They say, happen,

Arjun Awasthi 36:51

I see.

Wang Xiu 37:13

So, I think it's sort of similar.

Arjun Awasthi 37:51

Yes, it's a very interesting example. Yeah, how perspectives change over time as well. That's quite interesting. Yes, I guess finally. Do you have any final thoughts? Have you missed saying anything?

Wang Xiu 38:06

No.

Arjun Awasthi 38:08

Okay, great. Well, thank you so much for this interview. And everything is anonymous, so you don't have to worry about being identified. Yeah, it's from the beginning itself. That's why there's no video recording either. It's just audio recording.

Wang Xiu 38:23

Thank you. You're, welcome I mean, enjoy that. Thank

Arjun Awasthi 38:27

You for your answers. They were really, really useful for me. Thank you.

PART 2

00:01

Arjun Awasthi, so much for helping me out again and completing the second part of the interview. So basically, what I'm going to do is I have five images with me, and I will show them to you and describe what each image is, okay, and then after that, I'll ask you about your impressions, about the images. Okay, so this is the first image. Image A, this is a crocodile skin handbag, right? This is image B, this is a watch with an alligator skin strap, okay. Image C is a camera, and the camera has lizard skin on it. Oh, this one is, yes, it is a designer bag, Hermes bag. It's the crocodile skin birkin.

Wang Xiu 00:55

It's the most popular one, very hard to buy.

01:00

And the last one is a crocodile skin belt. So what are your first impressions after looking at these objects?

Wang Xiu 01:11

Impressions?

Arjun Awasthi 01:15

Yeah, I'll give them to you so you can keep looking at them.

Wang Xiu 01:22

Ah, what do you mean which one is my?

Arjun Awasthi 01:25

Not, right now. Just your initial feeling?

Wang Xiu 01:28

Yeah, gorgeous, posh, yeah, expensive.

Arjun Awasthi 01:41

And which one do you prefer out of these?

Wang Xiu 01:45

I know this one, so I prefer this one.

01:51

Which one is that, if you could just say it for the transcription.

Wang Xiu 01:58

Oh, image D, yeah. Image D, because it's a very popular handbag from the Hermes it's a Birkin bag. And just several days I watched a video they introduced a guy. That guy is selling the second hand the Birkin. I forgot his name, but I have no idea whether you know him. That guy's was very popular to buy the Birkin because it's very hard to buy and but that guy just like the performance to to performance a very posh people and and one he can buy Birkin in one day, buy three Birkin in different shops. So it's.

Arjun Awasthi 02:57

So no but so basically, he was showing you how you can buy these products for cheaper or?

Wang Xiu 03:05

No, no, not cheaper because No, not everyone can buy this one if you have the money you, Hermes have to buy other, buy a lot of other things in in advance, and after that, the sales can give you the bag.

Arjun Awasthi 03:28

Okay, so what you're saying is that to get this bag you have to buy other products?

Wang Xiu 03:33

Yes, exactly.

Arjun Awasthi 03:34

So it's that exclusive?

Wang Xiu 03:36

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 03:36

And also Hermes then makes it that not everyone can get it. You have to have a certain level.

Wang Xiu 03:43

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 03:44

Of money to buy it.

Wang Xiu 03:45

Exactly, and a lot of people on the waiting list and, and that guy, very brilliant and exactly he find this theory to buy the Birkin.

03:59

So you get pushed up in the wait list if you buy more products from Hermes. That's what you're saying?

Wang Xiu 04:04

Yes. But recently we, all of people know this, know the theory, if they want to buy a bag, they have to buy the other, but at that stage, nobody know that these people, this guy, found this so, yeah.

04:30

And so, what about this product? Do you find appealing or interesting?

Wang Xiu 04:37

Sorry?

Arjun Awasthi 04:38

What about this product, do you find appealing or interesting?

Wang Xiu 04:45

For me, I think just famous. But if I don't know what what it is exactly, I think it's totally same from totally same, similar as other pictures.

05:03

Okay, what do you mean by that? Sorry, I couldn't understand. So you're saying that this one is so, what about this? Do you like? Basically, is what I'm asking.

Wang Xiu 05:12

I think just the fame, famous, that is famous. Because it is famous, and I know this one. If I don't know this one like others, I think it's totally same. It looks, looks so nice all of this pictures show, yeah.

05:37

Okay, so it's, it's really about the brand and about how well known the brand is?

Wang Xiu 05:43

Oh, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 05:43

Yeah, and how about what it's made from? So obviously, it's made from crocodile skin. How do you feel about that? What about it is interesting?

Wang Xiu 05:54

I mean, just the skin this looks nice. And I think its, and here is diamond and the white gold, I guess. Oh, you see the chest recently. This one just selling, yes, I saw the video.

Arjun Awasthi 06:27

In an auction house, yeah, Christies.

Wang Xiu 06:30

Christies, yeah, yeah. So I saw the same one.

06:34

Well, all of these images I've gotten from online from okay, that are free to use.

Wang Xiu 06:39

Oh, okay.

Arjun Awasthi 06:40

So they're not copyrighted images

Wang Xiu 06:43

about 15, 15, how to translate that? Okay, one, 1015 1001 1005 and 500 pounds, 2020, Sorry is wrong to write. Okay. Around this.

Arjun Awasthi 07:45

so that's about 100 once, so 15,000 pounds, or 150,000 pounds.

Wang Xiu 07:53

Oh, 15, 15,000 pounds, 15,000 pounds.

07:55

Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. These bags do go for that price. Sometimes much higher than that as well.

Wang Xiu 08:02

Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 08:03

Yes, but yeah, so. Okay, that's good. And is there anything else about these products that you find that you want to say or want to talk about?

Wang Xiu 08:17

No. Do you have any questions from this? I think no, so beautiful. I love this. This one, the image C

Arjun Awasthi 08:29

The camera, Olympus with the lizard skin.

Wang Xiu 08:31

Yeah, lizard skin. So cool. The traps is looks similar like full film, full film, for film for film for film is a popular, popular brand of the camera from the Japan

Arjun Awasthi 08:52

Fuji film.

Wang Xiu 08:53

Yeah, Fujifilm, Fujifilm, it looks similar.

08:57

Yes, yes. So obviously, all of these are considered luxury products. Yeah, luxury Yeah, yeah, because even the camera is Olympus, yeah.

Wang Xiu 09:08

Exactly, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 09:10

Okay, great. Thank you.

Wang Xiu 09:13

That's all, okay.

PART 2 Continued

Wang Xiu 00:03

Image A and the image D, they are all the handbag, but I choose the image D it's I think it's not only is not only the colour is the white colour. I prefer the white colour always, but it's the very important element is the brand. This one I cannot recognize what the brand it is, but the image D I can recognize it is Hermes so it will catch my eye, yeah, I think this is what I want to emphasize. Brand is very important on the consumption and yeah, yeah, yeah,

Arjun Awasthi 00:57

I think yeah. Because even though I feel like personally, image A is also still elegant, yeah. But I see what you're saying. Right. Yeah, so every age is got also a different preference.

Wang Xiu 01:05

Exactly. This one is very nice as well, but I cannot recognize what brand it says but in for my mom's age, the the women who at my mom's age, they like, I don't know, in other countries, but in China, even especially they are working in the government, they like the handbag and like the clothes, cannot recognize the brand, but it looks very gorgeous. If this picture like my mom's to pick they they can they always like this one, because this one cannot recognize the brand, but it's the very gorgeous skin and, yeah, so it's different from my age. Yeah, life, different life stage, choose the product in a different way.

Arjun Awasthi 02:19

Yes,

Wang Xiu 02:19

yeah, yes. Is it what I want to addition.

Arjun Awasthi 02:26

Okay, anything else before I stop

Wang Xiu 02:28

I think, probably and why I want to pick up the handbag, not the watch. The watch always the expensive than the handbag and others, because if you measure the watch, value is not only the skin, so it's sort of more difficult. Probably it can put the gender element in. If the man to choose, probably they would like to choose the watch for them, female, they more like them handbag, that's all.

Speakers

Arjun Awasthi, Pratham

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

Okay. All right. So I'll keep it closer to you so that we can record it easily. So basically, I'm just going to ask a series of questions. And it's just going to be sort of like a discussion. So it's not that I'm going to stick to the questions, you know, based on our conversation, maybe I'll ask other questions as well. So it's a semi structured interview, I'll be giving you a definition of a term as well. When I ask the questions, and will ask questions based on that as we proceed. And once the questions have been answered, I'll show you a series of images just to get your impressions on those images and get some feedback on that. So do you have any questions before we start?

Pratham 00:40

So this is just about me quickly. So I've got a bit I've got a minor stutter. So sometimes, if I ask the questions, I may I may start doing "um um". So yeah, just bear that

Arjun Awasthi 00:49

That is totally fine. That's all right. All right. So to begin, can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Pratham 00:59

I've kind of told you a bit, but I'm [Pratham]. I'm, I'm I ethnically, I'm Indian, but I'm born here. This is my first year at university, and I'm based in London, but I've moved here for university. And yes, anything else that like

Arjun Awasthi 01:14

How old are you live? Right?

Pratham 01:15

Yeah. So I'm 18. I'm gonna turn 19 in August, and yeah, okay. I did my schooling in London as well.

Arjun Awasthi 01:24

Okay.

Pratham 01:24

I was brought there as well.

Arjun Awasthi 01:25

And what are you studying?

Pratham 01:27

Environmental science.

Arjun Awasthi 01:28

All right, great fantastic. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Pratham 01:35

Partly, yes, I do. I do see it as like a good is a good kind of like ambition to achieve towards I think, like, sometimes it's good to have that kind of like, need and urge for like really high end clothing and fashion. But I don't always see it as like a priority like this. Of course, there's other things in life, which you must always consider over like, the like, it's not a necessity, in simple terms. So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 02:02

Alright, so you set it something to sort of strive towards, in a sense, yeah, you feel that it brings something to aspire to. Would you agree with that? Yeah?

Pratham 02:17

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 02:18

All right. So what kind of fashion products or accessories are you interested in? Or do you buy?

Pratham 02:25

Well, in terms of luxuries, usually like shoes and belts, and like jewelry, and that kind of stuff that I'm really interested in. It's not much as like clothing, it's more accessories that I find more interesting.

Arjun Awasthi 02:38

What about these accessories? You find appealing?

Pratham 02:41

What about them? So I think quality, material, price. Price isn't always like, Isn't isn't always the determining factor. But it's something that I've taken into consideration this mostly like quality of material, brand, value, brand reputation. And yeah, that kind of stuff.

Arjun Awasthi 03:02

All right, exactly. That was going to be my next question is How important is the brand reputation? Yeah, and status symbol associated with these products for you? So would you say that they represent some sort of a status symbol?

Pratham 03:14

Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 03:15

How so?

Pratham 03:16

So, I think I think that it's all about like, reputation within society. So let's say you're wearing something like Balenciaga, for example, if it's really high end, people are gonna, of course, they're gonna, they're gonna give more interest into it. And, of course, it looked more like more, it makes you look more influential and more more like a, like an interesting person that you want to get to know them. They seem like they really know what they're doing. It just kind of gives you a good sense of confidence. So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 03:49

And what do you feel about fashion trends? Do you feel like you follow them? Why or why not?

Pratham 03:55

Sometimes I follow them. But I sometimes feel like it's out of my range, I like to stay consistent with what I wear and what I do, because then I feel like you need to be true to yourself. But some like if it's something that I feel like I can easily transition to then of course, I'd go for it, but it just is always dependent on what the actual fashion trend is.

Arjun Awasthi 04:17

Interesting. So you talked about consistency in Yeah. And being yourself. So how would you sort of talk about this kind of, I guess, style or fashion that you're more drawn towards?

Pratham 04:33

In am to like, like, like, like, give more of a like a summary of that, like in. Is it more like, like trends in the sense that sorry, I'm just a bit.

Arjun Awasthi 04:48

No, that's totally fine. Yeah, no. So I basically mean, how would you define your personal style?

Pratham 04:54

All right, so I'd like to go for like a, like a, like a mix of trendy and cool, because especially because of my situations in the sense that like trying to look for a partner and all that stuff like you, you kind of, I always feel this need to sell myself, but not stand out from the crowd. It's always trying to find that middle line. So that's why I kind of dress the way I do. And try to make sure that if you've got a balance, you can find the right part.

Arjun Awasthi 05:24

Yeah, that's very interesting. So now I'm going to talk specifically about exotic skins. Yeah. So what do you feel about exotic skins? And would you if you had the chance to obtain a luxury item that's made of exotic skins? Would you be drawn towards it? And would you consider owning it? And when I talk about exotic skins, I specifically mean skins from like snakes, alligator, crocodile, lizard, that those kinds of products.

Pratham 05:52

I'd say I'm more against it, especially because of like, my culture, my beliefs, my I've kind of been brought up like with, like, respecting animals and what they do. And of course, there's, I feel like there's

a fine line, there's a fine line between exploiting animals and using them for consumption. And I feel like these exotic animals should be left in like dwelling in their own habitats. And I feel like we shouldn't really be exploiting it. And yeah, I don't think it's right. Right.

Arjun Awasthi 06:19

Objectively, though, do you find these products that are made for them, say you see an Hermes bag that's made from crocodile skin or something objectively, do you think that is beautiful or appealing?

Pratham 06:31

Yeah, I would admit, yeah, some of them really do look like they do have that kind of wow factor. But I guess the way I've been brought up is just that, I wouldn't want it, I wouldn't want to be associated with it too much. Because then I feel like I'd be going against everything. And it's not something that I want to live with myself when. So yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 06:53

And you talked about it a little bit right now in my questioning, but what about these, aside from this wow factor, would you consider is appealing about luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skins?

Pratham 07:07

What would I consider appealing?

Arjun Awasthi 07:09

Yeah.

Pratham 07:11

I guess it's just that they're so rare, like in the sense that you especially in London, for example, you don't see that many people with those. So I feel like if you had ownership of one it really like, like, you'd have a lot of eyes on you. Like, it would be very like, Oh my God, who is he? And like, Yeah. Sort of our reputation in this in my in my sense. Yeah. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 07:37

So you spoke about, you know, how your background inhibits you from sort of engaging in this kind of purchasing activity and behavior. So have you ever felt conflicted about buying luxury fashion items sourced from exotic animals?

Pratham 07:51

I haven't actually, because I've always I've always tried to avoid try to make sure that I've stayed true to my beliefs and not not stray if you get what I mean. So yeah, okay. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:05

So you mentioned a little bit about how you believe that these animals should be left in their habitat, or whatever. So this question is, so how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products are sourced?

Pratham 08:23

Well, I reckon one thing is through like poaching and like, especially in like areas in Africa. I know for example, like ivory horns, like elephant tusks and ivory horns, that they get like these animals, they get poached, and then they also get they get killed illegally. And yeah, that's how I and then I tend to think that it goes through some processing stages till till they actually like manufacture it, like send it factories and then manufacture into like clothing, accessories and all that stuff. Okay, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:56

Any other ideas? Aside from poaching? That you could think of?

Pratham 08:59

Um not not right now. Yeah, I'm trying to think of something else can't really think of anything else?

Arjun Awasthi 09:19

That's alright, that's fine. So do you know anything about the wildlife trade? If so, what do you know?

Pratham 09:26

I'm vaguely familiar with it. But isn't it isn't the wildlife trade is near basically a scheme which is aimed at aimed at like stopping this like, this, like not transportation, but it's more like trading off like skins or like, like all of these things from like exotic animals. Is it that?

Arjun Awasthi 09:47

Well, I mean, I, I'm just curious to know what you're impressions are.

Pratham 09:52

Yeah. So I've been taught something similar, but it's more like, like the Rio convention that we've been taught about because I know that's also like have to stop to like protect, like habitat, biodiversity of the species because some of them tend to be like really keystone, they tend to be important for the wild for like the food, like the food, like the ecological pyramids, the food chains, and that kind of stuff so I feel like if you're, if you're if you're getting rid of these, that apex predator, so let's see tiger skins. Now if you're poaching the Tigers, then you're really like disrupting their habitat, you may cause it to degrade. And we don't want that, do we? So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:30

All right, great. Okay, so now I'm going to read out that definition. And then I'm going to ask you some questions based off of that, all right. So there is a concept known as cognitive dissonance in psychology. So cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency.

Pratham 11:00

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 11:00

All right. So do you experience this kind of discomfort when you buy luxury fashion products? If so, how do you eliminate the discomfort?

Pratham 11:14

I sometimes do. But I think it's more about well, if I let's say I wanted to purchase, like, let's say like, like a chain, for example, from like a luxury brand, then I think more about the if the material kind of involved if there was like kind of material which isn't sustainably sourced, for example, or like, that, then I'd usually I'd usually want to think about the wider context of it. And I try to consider I try to consider that over the price. Because I'm, sometimes I'm like, Okay, let me pay, let me pay a higher price, but I'll get more I'll get a sustainably sourced one, for example. So it's kind of like I tried to use my culture and my beliefs to to outweigh one over the other if you get what I mean.

Arjun Awasthi 12:04

So then you would say that a higher price to you indicates that it is more sustainably sourced?

Pratham 12:10

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 12:11

Okay. And in, but in doing so then paying a premium? You're sort of eliminating this conflicting thought.

Pratham 12:18

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 12:19

So but if you do have a conflicting thought, like, what is it? So what what is it aside from just the knowledge or awareness or lack thereof, that it's sustainable? Like, what are some internal values and beliefs that you have that you have to sort of mitigate or cross over to then buy these products?

Pratham 12:39

And that's a lot of thought.

Arjun Awasthi 12:41

Take your time.

Pratham 12:42

You have you just run over the question to me, I've kind of I've just gone blank.

Arjun Awasthi 13:04

Yeah, it's totally fine. So basically, I'll talk about what cognitive dissonance is again, yes. Right. So basically, what happens is that say you want to purchase X product. But you have thought in your mind, that says, Actually, I don't know something is holding me back from buying it. But then you mitigate that thought, and you go ahead and buy it again, just crossing that bridge. So that's what I really mean. And

that's what I'm really trying to understand is what kind of basically what kind of values and ideas would you then suppress or behaviors that you would suppress in order to buy these products?

Pratham 13:43

And so I'd say there's an element of guilt involved, because I know it's about sustainable sourcing and all that stuff, but I know that it's not, it's not always a nice thing that I'd say to own a lot of, let's say jewelry, for example. And I don't really want to I don't like to hoard stuff. If you get what I mean, so sometimes I feel like what's the word like as in? How do I explain it? Sorry, there's a lot going on. So I can't explain it. So when I'm coming back to the idea of guilt, I'd say more than, like, thinking about, okay, of course, it's thinking about where the item has been sourced, but also thinking about me as a person I have I got this item already, like, do I actually need it? So it's also thinking about I'm thinking thinking into the future, for example, because I was like, like, I'm a uni student. For example, I may have money problems in the future may do now. Like, it's all about, like thinking two steps ahead. And that's something that's sometimes like of kind of thought process that I go through when I sometimes buy some of these products.

Arjun Awasthi 15:13

So then how do you get over the guilt?

Pratham 15:15

Right. Well, that's more I it's more of an impulse choice either just either just buy it and I don't think about it, or I just I, like, I take two steps back, and I just don't buy it. So it's how these two is a double edged sword in the sense.

Arjun Awasthi 15:33

That's exactly what I'm trying to understand. Yeah. So then it's just sort of an impulse, then you don't really think about it. So you just

Pratham 15:40

yeah, just do it. Just do it. Yeah, just do it.

Arjun Awasthi 15:43

Alright. Alright, if you could buy, inherit or be gifted products that are made from exotic skins? Would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or to others?

Pratham 15:58

Yeah, because I don't, because of like, once again, about my culture and beliefs. I don't really like to be associated with those kind of like items and all that stuff. So I would if I was found to be in ownership, of one of them, I would need to explain that I haven't willingly gone and bought the product. I've rather been gifted it, for example. So yeah, that's that's kind of like how I see it.

Arjun Awasthi 16:23

And then like, what kind of ways would you justify it? So for example, have you ever ever claimed that a product is imitation or faux when it was authentic?

Pratham 16:34

Yeah. I mean, that is a good one about the faux leather, for example. Yeah. How do I justify it? I mean, yeah, as I said before, like, saying that it's not actually I wouldn't want to be associated because it wasn't gifted to me. And in the sense that. Yeah, can't really think of anything else. Yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 17:12

Basically, what words would you use when you're talking to someone if they were to ask you, oh, you know, this product, you know, and you don't associate with with the product? So what kind of language would you use that to dissociate yourself from it?

Pratham 17:28

So I'd say, Well, I probably a big one. I say it's fake. Okay. It's a big one that I just say it's fake because, like, once again, I just, if I would get caught having it, then I would want to say that it's not real. Yeah, not real fake. So yeah, kind of just need a bit of water.

Arjun Awasthi 17:50

Yeah, sure.

Pratham 17:52

Thank you. Sorry, where were we?

Arjun Awasthi 18:05

That's fine. No way. This is really great stuff. Thank you so much. Um, so you were talking a lot about your values, and who you are as a person and how that informs you and how you don't like to necessarily outwardly be associated with these products. So have you faced an ethical concern when buying certain luxury products? And how were you able to overcome your moral dilemma?

Pratham 18:32

I don't really think I think. I don't really think I've faced an ethical dilemma, because I've always put my foot down before actually, like, go ahead with it. And I always try to make sure I don't, I don't like I don't go near I don't go near the temptation, because then once I do, then I'll face that ethical dilemma. So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:51

so you preempt it?

Pratham 18:53

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:53

You just avoid the guilt in all of this.

Pratham 18:56

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:56

We're not gonna deal with this right now. So I'm just not going to do it.

Pratham 18:58

That's me my whole life avoiding everything honestly. So you just, okay. Just turn a blind eye.

Arjun Awasthi 19:08

So, and you did touch upon this a little bit, I want to ask a little bit more in detail about this specific issue. Do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why or why not?

Pratham 19:27

Yes, definitely. So once again, I've talked about like this illegal poaching of animals and about how we as humans were seen as stewards were seen as like this kind of we shouldn't be exploiting animals for our own benefit, we should be we're essentially seen as the most one of the most intelligent species on the planet. We've got good sense of like, of place and who we are, as like a species, how we fit into this community or this whole the whole biosphere for example. And like we we shouldn't be exploiting animals for our own benefit. I keep saying that, but yeah it's true. And, yeah, that's how I kind of see it.

Arjun Awasthi 20:07

How do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions? Right?

Pratham 20:11

Okay. Yeah. So for example, okay, in my sense, I've got a dog, for example, I love him to bits. And I wouldn't I'd see I'd kind of see the animals in the same way as he would like I would, I would be distraught if someone did that to, let's say, dogs, for example, like, on the animals like, they they don't have, they don't have sense of like, they don't animals, animals don't have sense of like, right or wrong, were the ones were the ones who essentially have to be the spokespersons for that. And like, we shouldn't we shouldn't we shouldn't be the ones to judge whether they like whether they get sold into like this kind of like exotic animal produce or whatnot, we should rather let them let them do what they need, like what they can do, and not interfere with like natural like, natural like dynamics of let's say the ecosystem for example.

Arjun Awasthi 21:06

So then would you say there is a difference between pet companion or domestic animals and wild animals?

Pratham 21:11

There is there is a there is a kind of like a difference. But the way I see I see a more of an association rather than "Oh, this is this and this is that". Because I once again, I always felt like we should always be the one to take care of animals, we shouldn't be harming them, we should do more good than harm. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 21:32

And based on your personal beliefs, so what it was so I'm a vegetarian or flexitarian. Okay, so what does that mean?

Pratham 21:40

So, religiously? I'm vegetarian on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I don't eat beef at all because I'm Hindu, and I eat everything else apart from everything else apart from beef, and except Tuesdays and Thursdays I only eat veg. Yeah. And that's, that's me.

Arjun Awasthi 21:59

Okay. And does that sort of impact how you buy products? No, really,

Pratham 22:03

Because I because I feel like diet soy is a different thing. Like, I don't know if I kind of touched on this, but like, I feel like I said animals, like animals for consumption are different from like, exotic animals. So that's kind of the reason why I don't like to associate like poultry and like meat and all that stuff with like exotic animals. I was like, there's a fine line.

Arjun Awasthi 22:25

Okay, so you do definitely believe that, that there are some animals that are for consumption? And some that aren't?

Pratham 22:30

Yes, yes.

Arjun Awasthi 22:31

Okay. And how do you make that distinction?

Pratham 22:34

It's a societal thing to be honest. So like, because I've been brought up here I see as eating like I just here I've brought I've been brought eating chicken, lamb, fish, prawn, seafood, crustaceans and all that stuff. But like, yeah, so that's how I'd say it's a societal thing. Because if I was brought up in India, for example, I'd probably just be veg or on that. So that's kind of the reason why I've kind of made that distinguishment from consumption versus, like pet companions, and like exotic animal, for example.

Arjun Awasthi 23:06

So then what is the fine line for you?

Pratham 23:12

So essentially, it's, it's the general it's the general and is the general like, like animals, like livestock like pigs, cows, we I don't eat beef, chicken, lamb, nor the or the ones that society generally sees as like food for consumption, compared to, let's say, exotic animals. Like I define them in the sense that they're not native to this area. We don't eat them here. But like in other countries, they might. So that's kind of

the way I see as like food for consumption is based on the animals that we eat here, versus the ones that are eaten in other countries, and which they may see as exotic, but no, which they may see as like consumption, but we see as exotic. So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 24:03

That's very interesting, because I appreciate you bringing in the cultural context here. So then, would you then say that it's acceptable, in a certain context, to then use exotic animals for consumption, not necessarily for food consumption, but then for making fashion products?

Pratham 24:25

Yeah, it's a gray area, isn't it? Like, because we see things differently from them. But then once again, I'd say that, like, it's, it's out of our control, you can't really do much about it. If it's their culture, they've been brought up with it. You can't just go off and be like, oh, yeah, we don't eat that here. Why are you eating it? Like, you can't just demand your culture. You can't throw your culture into other countries and expect them to just willingly comply. So that's the kind of the reason why I'd say that.

Arjun Awasthi 24:59

All right. Great, thank you. Yeah, my next question was just going to be about pet companions. But this was very fascinating. So, right, I'm gonna wrap up these questions, and then we're gonna move on to the images. But is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products made from exotic skins or just in general?

Pratham 25:24

Don't really have anything I've just exhausted myself.

Arjun Awasthi 25:27

But what kind of I mean, I guess what I'm curious to know is what are your personal attitudes towards luxury fashion products?

Pratham 25:36

So in summary, I, I'm, I'd say I'm kind of for them. But because there's so it's so hard to define one thing, which branches off into so many different things. So I'd say I'm kind of for them, but I'm also against like, the very extreme ones. Say, Yeah,

Arjun Awasthi 25:56

and what would you say are extreme?

Pratham 25:59

So okay. I honestly say exotic, like, exotic ones, I'd say that I'd say they're seen as like, extreme for me. I'd say it's more like the material jewelry, for example, from them, like as an example of an accessory that I'd say, are acceptable to me. But if it's like made from let's say, like, like, crocodile skin, then I probably like take a step back and I would be like yeah, no.

Arjun Awasthi 26:23

And as you said, if you would be gifted it you would say it's not real?

Pratham 26:27

Yeah, it's fake. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 26:29

Yeah. Do you have any final thoughts? Have you missed saying something?

Pratham 26:33

No, I feel like I've got the whole picture. Okay. Yeah. Yeah, thank

Arjun Awasthi 26:37

you very much. All right. So now I'm just going to show you these images and I would ask you, if you can to just also when you're talking about images, I've labeled them as image A, B, C, D. So if you can tell for the transcription what you think about image A and B, etc. and I just, yeah, you can just go through them yourself. And If you have any questions about the images, please feel free to ask me as well.

Pratham 28:32

Right.

Arjun Awasthi 28:35

All right, go ahead. What do you think about image A?

Pratham 28:39

While it's kind of giving, like a reminiscing of like, could you say I'm kind of conflicted, whether it's more like snake skin or crocodile skin? I know it's one of them. But yeah, I It looks like it's used a large, like a very large volume of the animal it is kind of hard, it kind of kind of stings looking at it. Like knowing that. Like, it's just not it just doesn't sit right, I guess. And I feel like the same I'd argue the same thing for image D. Like it not including the price for let's just, it's just that, like, the way it's just the way it's described the handbag and like it's just the way it's been processed. It just doesn't it doesn't sit right because then you can kind of imagine like, you can imagine the animal like it doesn't feel right. So yeah. I don't think I get the same kind of like feeling for image B and C though. But that's mainly because the volume of the animal skin used is much less in the camera and the watch compared to the handbags. And then if I've missed one, I missed one yet. I felt the same the same fo E as well. But I think I made The snakeskin actually no, I think it's crocodile actually yeah, it's crocodile. But I don't I don't see that kind of same association with with the three things compared to the two handbags. And it's also the way they've been described as well. So yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 30:17

And what are your aesthetic impressions about these products? Um,

Pratham 30:22

So in terms of look, I think, like, okay, let's say for example, image D, I think the handbag is kind of attractive, like the colors and all that stuff. But I think some of them like let's say C and E, like they're pretty monotonous in their kind of like colors. It's very gray, dark and dark shades. I wouldn't really be a fan of that. I think it's more of the lighter and image A as well with a dark handbag. I think. I think the lighter want to be more of an attractive one.

Arjun Awasthi 30:53

And how about the watch?

Pratham 30:56

I think also I liked the color of the watch. So a tan color as well. I think it looks nice. It may be made out of leather, though. Not too sure. But yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 31:09

Yeah, it is alligator skin.

Pratham 31:11

alligator skin. Right. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 31:12

So is that something that looks appealing?

Pratham 31:15

I mean, yeah, it looks appealing. But, yeah, it looks appealing. But the thing is, I think I'd prefer like, if I was kind of forced into it, I think I'd prefer if it was as minimalistic as possible. And I feel like with the watch, you can easily get away with that. Like, like people wouldn't associate with being a skin that you can easily just tell someone it's fake. So that's fine. I'd say I probably prefer let's say I love watching the image be over the handbag, I wouldn't use one, but I probably prefer image A like image B's watch over image A as a handbag.

Arjun Awasthi 31:55

If you were to maybe buy one of these products, would you consider it?

Pratham 32:04

individually? I probably consider image B. One because I'm a guy. I wouldn't consider the handbags. I'd probably consider the camera but I'm not really a camera person.

Arjun Awasthi 32:18

But just as a concept you would consider.

Pratham 32:22

Yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 32:23

All right. Any other impressions from these images? Does the price have anything to do with it? Because you got mentioned like brand reputation and price earlier.

Pratham 32:39

Kind of looking at it kind of does right now by seeing 240K to 390K is quite a large number. But yeah, it may not have been it may not have been as impactful then because I hadn't considered it as much but now that I've actually seen a picture see like the price of one for example. It does kind of like Sting.

Arjun Awasthi 33:05

Okay, it stings.

Pratham 33:06

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 33:07

So it makes you feel uncomfortable.

Pratham 33:09

Yeah, it does. Especially being in ownership of one I wouldn't want to I really like when I go for luxury items. I don't like to go for ones which are like, very top. I like to I like to be frugal. Well, maybe not frugal, but more like modest with my with it like because then it's always the idea of like, like destroy like causing damage to the thing and then feeling guilty about like, doing that kind of stuff.

Arjun Awasthi 33:12

And I guess because you mentioned the volume of the skin that's used. So you can see the animal in this.

Pratham 33:51

Yes, in this. Okay, definitely an image D definitely. They can quite literally imagine that the two parts going out like the spots on the side. It's very, like, disturbing.

Arjun Awasthi 34:06

Yeah. All right. I guess then that's the interview done, right.

Pratham 34:12

Oh, yeah. Oh my god.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Andrej

Arjun Awasthi 00:01

All right. Thank you so much for participating in this research study. So I'm basically just going to ask you a series of questions and it's semi-structured, so sort of I build off of questions based on our conversation and it'll be fully anonymized so none of your information will be shared with anybody. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Andrej 00:26

No.

Arjun Awasthi 00:27

Okay, great. So I'll just dive right into it, then. Yeah. So can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Andrej 00:37

I'm a third year medical student and I my dad's from Iran, my mom's from Slovakia but I was born in London. And I moved here a few years ago, because I did a foundation course. So I've been studying at Southampton for four years now. And yeah, that's, that's pretty much that like sums it down unless you want to get into the nitty gritty about like, hobbies and stuff like that.

Arjun Awasthi 01:01

No, but how old are you?

Andrej 01:03

Oh, I'm 23. Okay, yeah. 23. Yeah, I find that well it depending on it is because some of it I find a bit pretentious, because I feel like, there are some brands that like charge a lot. I mean, you see on the news, a lot of stuff like Balenciaga charging a lot for certain things, which look, quite frankly, ugly in my opinion. But there are some things. I guess they're luxury, because they have really good, like good materials, and like they're long lasting. And nowadays, you hear a lot about fast fashion, and poor quality like clothes, that it kind of pushes you to look for something that actually is more durable and is better sustainable for the environment and better for the just factories and workers and everything. So you'd think that luxury fashion, they at least treat their staff better you know, like the like, if you have to pay more for something, then there's probably going to be like, ethically sourced, if that makes sense. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:07

Okay. Yeah, no, that's fine. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you? And how would you define luxury fashion?

Andrej 02:17

Oh, again, this is tricky, because when I think about my head, it's like something like, either clothing or like accessory that is high, really good quality material and they charge like a higher amount for it because of the material and because of the style. But it's like a rare piece. It's not like manufactured like 1000s of them. There's like a few of them that and if that if that makes sense.

Arjun Awasthi 02:46

Absolutely, absolutely. That's fine. So what kind of fashion products or accessories do you buy?

02:53

Oh, I love leather jackets. The problem is leather jackets are so expensive. On my kind of what's it called budget, yes budget on my kind of budget is kind of hard to buy leather jacket. So I usually go through like vintage vintage sales or like charity shops and get them because they're really good, though my dad sometimes hands me down his because he back in the day he used to collect them. And you know, back in the 80s and 90s leather jackets were really popular. So I go I get some from him and I get my own. Also, it depends but I did recently purchase this really nice watch of my own. Because it was themed on this like favorite movie of mine from Studio Ghibli called like Nausicaa, I really wanted to get it and the place I could have got it for was discounted from the original price. So I was like, that's the first time I actually proper purchased a big luxury item for like a high amount, which wasn't good for my bank account.

Arjun Awasthi 03:55

And I guess what about this product? You mentioned that it was representative of a favorite movie of yours but what about this watch particularly was appealing to you?

Andrej 04:05

I don't know, it was the sentiment behind it because I used to watch a movie when I was a child and to see that and like a grown up form. So I can always have like a piece of like my childhood like with me whenever I wore it. And I always felt like because when you're a student, especially when you study medicine, you don't really treat yourself well. Because you work hard, you push yourself really hard. So I thought that that would be might be like a good thing to finally treat myself with something and get something nice. So it was like a lot more sentimental value than actually me liking the watch because I did like the watch but it meant more than that, if that makes sense.

Arjun Awasthi 04:38

Right. So basically you're saying that buying a luxury product is in a way to reward yourself?

Andrej 04:42

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 04:44

Okay. So how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products for you?

Andrej 04:51

Oh it's tricky because i be i used to volunteer in like, let's say a charity shop. So I got to learn a lot more about the brands and what the high end brands are the less high end brands are. And really, because of that, I can instantly look at a brand or like the name, I'd be like, oh, yeah, that's higher end one. But to me, it didn't mean as much as long as like the clothing looked good, I was more of that kind of person, where if the clothing looked good, and you felt comfortable wearing it, then that's more than the brand. But I know for others, especially some of my friends, where branding is everything that they know and even in like different cultures, because I know back in Slovakia, they are very picky about what brands you wear. So if you don't wear those kinds of brands, they kind of look down on you. So you're kind of forced to wear those brands or like brand adjacent style sort of things to try and fit in. And so yeah, to me, doesn't mean as much but.

Arjun Awasthi 05:49

And do you tend to follow fashion trends? Why or why not?

Andrej 05:56

I always was more of that kind of person where I'd rather just be unique and have my own style. Because I feel like if I follow my own fashion, follow the fashion trends. I just look the same as like any other kind of person so I just find something that like fits me good, makes me feel good. And then I look different because I'm not following everyone else. So I stand out more which is my kind of idea of that.

Arjun Awasthi 06:18

So jumping off that how would you define your personal style?

06:22

Oh, well right now a lot of it right now is comfort because I was working in the hospital so I'm wearing trackies and stuff just to be not have to wear scrubs and it's too hot. Usually a mix between like that kind of rockers aesthetic you know like Camden town like punk because I have like a plaid, I have the leather bicep cuffs and stuff like that, got chains, so more of like a rocker kind of look, but that's what I'm trying but other times it could be just really nice pattern shirts where I pair it with like some like jeans and just if I wanted to go a bit more sophisticated or casual or smart casual, but it just depends on the mood I'm feeling like if I'm partying or going out and then the rocker that comes out. If it's something more formal, then I'll go for like a not cottage core, because you can't really go cottage core with like men's clothing but yeah, that kind of like shirt and some like khakis and stuff like

Arjun Awasthi 07:21

Yeah, yeah. So it varies between.

Andrej 07:23

It varies just depending on what I'm doing.

Arjun Awasthi 07:25

That's interesting. And you had mentioned that you get hand me downs from your dad. Yeah, in terms of leather jackets. So this question is that if you had the chance to obtain a luxury item, such as a jacket

or a handbag or whatever, that was made from exotic skins so not necessarily buying it yourself, Perhaps being gifted it would you consider owning it?

Andrej 07:46

Yes, if it had sentimental value, and the person handing it down said that this was like maybe like a family heirloom or an item then I'd probably take care of it because I know it has history within the family. If they had gone on holiday and just gotten it somewhere I'd maybe be less inclined to look after it because you know I'm not into the whole kind of exotic animal skin and stuff. I but like you know if it was like a family heirloom and something that there's been handed down for ages then yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:17

Okay, great. So, of course my research study looks at exotic skins such as alligator, crocodile, snake, and lizard. So what do you consider appealing? If anything about luxury fashion products that are made from these exotic skins?

Andrej 08:31

Oh I'm trying to think well what would be appealing about them? I guess maybe. Maybe like because I have seen like alligator skin handbags before and I see that the kind of pattern and the texture it has is unique. The idea of that maybe being a leather jacket might be cool but I just know that that would require like skinning an alligator which I would just put you put me off personally. I guess maybe it would just like I guess it can make like a stand up piece if it was a luxury item but yeah, it's definitely something that not many people would own because like you know, I guess trying to sorcerer trying to pay for it. You don't see many people who have these kind of things, but when you do you can instantly notice like, oh, this person's wearing something cool special.

Arjun Awasthi 09:26

Have you ever felt conflicted about buying luxury fine fashion items sourced from exotic animals?

Andrej 09:36

I never I never have. I haven't I've not bought but when I used to volunteer we used to get a lot of furs like real animal furs donated in and it was quite conflicting selling them because you could see like mink stole I think the mink stoles and like you could actually see foxes turned into scarves and everything and they're horrible to touch because when you touch them, you get the I got that reaction where you just want to flinch your arm back, but I felt conflicted selling them because I just didn't feel like it was right to carry on these things. I know they like I guess the animal has been dead, but you don't know where that thing was sourced from and if it was sourced ethically if it can be ethically sourced. So then I don't want to like perpetuate, like demand and then perpetuate that cruelty further if it was cruelly sourced if that makes sense.

Arjun Awasthi 10:29

if it was ethically sourced, what would it take them for you to then consider it, buying it.

Andrej 10:37

If it was, if it was proven to be ethically sourced, and like there was no cruelty involved, then I guess that would be good enough justification, that would be enough justification, because I think there's like uncertainty on whether these items were like, ethically sourced or not. And for me, I'm not that kind of person or be completely put off. I mean, I have leather jackets and leather boots, I'm not completely put off from leather or skins like that. But it has to be at least proven that it's not coming from like a factory or where like, the factory workers are being abused, the animals were being abused, because then that will put me off the company as a whole. But if it was proven to be sourced like that, then I'd be like, okay, this is a cool brand. They're getting these items they're treatment workers and animals well, perhaps maybe when an animal dies, that's when they get the skin and to me, I find that kind of company a bit more cooler compared to other brands, where you know that they're not as ethical. So I would be more inclined to actually buy them. So.

Arjun Awasthi 11:38

Yeah, all right. So how do you think exotic skins used to make these products are sourced?

Andrej 11:45

Oh I'm not, I'm not really sure. See, most of the most of the ideas are either heresay or just like rumors or stuff, like I haven't seen something like factually documented, I may have seen a documentary back in the day, about the like farms or like factories, whether you could see there the animals being bred and grown up there. And then after they get there, they get killed at like a young age and then that's what they used to fur for and then that's what they've been treated. But I don't have much information so I just make the presumption that all of it is being unethically sourced.

Arjun Awasthi 12:22

Okay.

Andrej 12:23

And that's why in my head when I see it, I was like, oh, that's probably from like, an animal farm somewhere. And, you know, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 12:31

But some of these breeding facilities are regulated. So I guess, you know, if that was the case, then the sourcing, so you've mentioned about, you know, in the previous question about ethically sourcing. So, do you know anything about the wildlife trade? If so, what do you know,

Andrej 12:51

Wildlife trade is that like exotic like selling and trading of exotic animals as pets as well? Parts of it. I know that that aspect because I know back in London in my area, there's a high amount of Indian ringnecked parakeets, that the green ones that just look and I know that one of the shops there, they do this like it's ethically moral but they catch them and clip the wings and then sell them to people, which is horrible. I tried to my family tried to file a complaint against these people. Nothing the council did nothing about it. To the point where we've actually rescued a few from them, because they you know, you you see these injured birds, and you can't just like, let go, you can't just stop it. But I know that some animals they get taken away from their natural habitat. And then they get sold as like pets. And

also people can keep like leopards and cheetahs and America, I forget how you can actually keep alligators as pets, which is surprising. I don't I don't know the other aspect of it. I know some I guess some animals taken and use for like medicinal use or like, I know some people probably have it as like a culinary thing where they're curious about how an animal tastes like so they would buy the animal and kill it and then cook it. But that's all I know from [inaudible].

Arjun Awasthi 12:59

Part of it. That's great. Thank you. So now I'm going to give you a definition and based off of this definition, I'm going to ask a few questions. So there is a concept that's known as cognitive dissonance. And cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. All right. So is that definition clear?

Andrej 14:10

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:39

So do you experience this kind of discomfort when either you buy such products or inherit given these products? And if so, how do you eliminate the discomfort? Oh, I used to have cognitive dissonance. I mean, back in the day I used to be very indecisive because I had different opinions, and I couldn't decide between the two. So for me, if I, let's say, if I were to buy those products, I'll probably like try and offset it with doing something else that's better for the environment. Like recently, especially, I've been trying to get into more like vegan and sustainable like cooking. Because I see we've had like an optional module will not cause about cooking for the environment. And you see how bad even processed meats, and meats are in general for your health. And so that in my head, like if I buy a leather jacket, and maybe I'll go like, more vegan and kind of cut down on my meat usage for like a certain period of time, when it comes to like inheriting the items. I feel like because I'm not buying it brand new, then I'm not creating extra demand for it. If I were to buy these items brand new, then I know that I'd be just fueling the companies that make more of this product. So that's why when I do buy these items, I always try and buy them secondhand vintage, because for one costs, but also, that way I know I'm not giving, the company is not getting the demand that they want, you know, the stuff like that. So I try and offset it and balance it and just make peace with the fact that I'm never going to appease either one of these opinions. So all I can do is just make a good compromise between the two. Fair enough. Yeah. Great, if you could buy, inherit or be gifted these products? Would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or to others? How would you justify it? How have you justified it? For example, have you ever claimed that a product is fake or imitation when it was authentic or exotic skin?

Andrej 16:47

The only way I guess I would if I were to inherit it, I would use the family kind of reasoning I'd be like, Okay, this is a family heirloom, there's sentiment, if I were to buy a brand new, I'd probably still be a bit more conflicted on it. Because I love animals. I don't want to like see them harmed. So maybe I maybe I would do the excuse maybe I'll use the kind of thing where it's like I deserve a treat. It depends on how much I love the item and how much I'm actually going to use it because I try to think of it and more

practically, how am I going to use this item a lot? Is it just going to be for decoration? Will I actually wear this? Or will it get ruined after one wear? That's why I try and think of it practically to try and justify whether I get it or whether I not get it. And yeah, stuff like that.

Arjun Awasthi 17:32

Yeah, brilliant. Thank you. So have you faced an ethical concern when buying certain products, how we were able to overcome your moral dilemma?

Andrej 17:47

Back in the day, especially when costs were low, I used to go to places like Primark and now recently you've seen a lot about the fast fashion. And how Primark treats its like the factories that Primark gets its items and clothing it's from. And I was tempted to like buy fashion stuff from like Shein. I think that's like, that's another one. And then recently, I've seen a lot about the factory workers and the child labor that they use to try and make these items and clothing. And it put me off entirely because if I see these items, and I think about that, and how they're getting paid nothing. And I'm in a place of privilege, where I can buy these items, but they're in a place where they have to work just to get 20p so they can survive for the week. And it makes me bite the bullet where I'd rather go to a place where I know that the clothes are better for what they treat their workers better, it's going to last longer. So then it's not going to break after three uses. And that way I know that my conscience is clear in that sense where like, I know I'm not getting it from somewhere where the children working on my clothes.

Arjun Awasthi 18:54

Excellent. Yeah. So do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why why not?

Andrej 19:03

Yeah, I think so depending, like I said, animal cruelty is a very important one. Where if we don't know where these skins are being obtained from whether these like animals are being grown in like unethical environments, or if they're being killed unethically, then there are many concerns to it about the mistreatment of the animals and the workers who work with these [inaudible]. I think there just needs to be a little clarity when it comes to these items there needs to be a lot of clarity where they came from, how their processed, maybe even like that you get to see the factories that they've been worked like in because that way you get a better idea how your clothes are being made, how these items are being made as well. They can be a lot and I think that just comes from the lack of, I guess potentially the lack of information if you don't put the research in, that arises from just seeing the item and making presumptions or just taking like one article as fact and then not actually doing your research into it.

Arjun Awasthi 20:00

So how do you how do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Andrej 20:09

I think even though I wouldn't be able to buy real fur it's just that to me there is something when I touch real fur I get like it gets like the sense in the back of my head why I immediately flinch anytime I used to volunteer. I used to go through the bags and you could feel that there was a clear difference between

real and fake for you. It's easy to tell when you put your hand in hand both of them and when I touch real fur it just makes me flinch because it doesn't feel right you just see this like skinned animal and some of the some of the skins you could actually see the heads still terrible terrible things and it just it felt wrong and I don't know my mind just says like now don't just stay away from it I think I wouldn't be able to I think I'd have to get like leather boots leather stuff I can get secondhand exotic animal stuff again maybe if it was handed down by my family or secondhand but I don't think I could ever get it new. I just don't want to drive that kind of interest in these items.

Arjun Awasthi 21:05

And what are your feelings towards animals?

Andrej 21:07

Oh, I love them I have so many I mean back at home I have around like nine cats. In London my mom was nine cats! We've rescued so many birds like we have we rescued two Indian greenneck parakeets, rescued two pigeons as well that we can't let go because they keep flying back whenever we try and release them. So like yeah, I love I love animals. I rescue them as much as I can.

Arjun Awasthi 21:28

And yeah, this was going to be my next question is about pet so if you have pets, does having a pet companion influence your purchasing decisions?

Andrej 21:37

Yeah, I think so. Because I love all sorts of animals and then to see that like skins on like clothing, you would just put me off like clothing entirely because I though, I guess I'm a bit biased, because if it was something fluffy and cute, then I'd be more inclined to not wear it. It feels like leather because I like leather comes from cows and I'm fully aware of that. And yeah, I still eat beef. I still eat chicken. I still eat all these things. And yeah, I'm more upset I'm more off put from like stuff like mink, or these kind of fluffy, cute like foxes. I guess there is some sort of like hypocrisy in there somewhere. But you know, I guess this is how life works. You're trying to justify things and make things make sense in your head. So how would you sort of tow the line then? Like, what are the different? So do create different categories in your head? When it comes to Okay, these animals are for X purpose or this animal is for Y purpose. I think so I think subconsciously I guess growing up you always will. Okay, these animals are for food. These animals are for food, but you could also wear them. And then these animals you can wear them and these animals are pets. And I guess like when you grow older, and you start making your own like mind and opinions on things, it's trying to like, not desensitize, but like, I'm like, unbrainwash yourself from these kinds of like, growing up what you were given because like most of the times, I mean, like nursery rhymes, you'd have like the old MacDonald and like the farm, and then you would think, okay, you would would have a farm of cows, cows beef milk, okay, chicken, you'd have chicken eggs. It's driven into us, I think from a young age. And it's only when you start developing your own kind of opinions about life and animals that you started with, like, get your way. Like get your own opinion and your mind away from that kind of teachings and desensitization from everything. I think even now subconsciously even though I am aware of like the impact of like these, like exotic animals in fashion or food, I still do these certain things because it is still it's like natural to you because you've done it for so long. It's tricky. It is tricky.

Arjun Awasthi 23:51

Okay, so thank you so much. Now, just a few questions to wrap up. So is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products made from exotic skins and do you have any final thoughts? Just anything to say?

Andrej 24:09

I'm trying to think, I just hope everything made sense from my opinion. I don't know if I like I'm speaking in coherent sentences because it's been a long day at the hospital so I don't know.

Arjun Awasthi 24:21

You're doing fine.

Andrej 24:22

Yeah, okay, that's perfect. I'm not sure I can add anything else at the moment.

Arjun Awasthi 24:26

Alright, so now I'm just going to finally show you show you a series of images and so take some time to look at them. They're five images and then I'll ask a few questions about them.

Andrej 24:46

The camera! like I literally have a camera like that.

Arjun Awasthi 24:49

All right, so what are your first impressions?

Andrej 25:07

One I'm guilty of owning the watch and the camera. Because yeah, no, I actually I literally have that camera at home and the watch has straps like that.

Arjun Awasthi 25:19

Sorry. No you go ahead.

Andrej 25:22

First impressions. I really don't like image D it just to me I just I don't know when I see skin like that and I'm thinking, okay it's reptilian. My my opinion on it is like, is it worth it you're carrying something like that? because to me it doesn't look visually appealing so I wouldn't ever want to get something like that. So because I don't see that I don't see the point of view like having that even created. I know that you can get belts like that, but I've always preferred just a normal leather belt. But again that is animal skin so hypocrisy there. I do like the I don't know if a snake skin or something like that the bag?

Arjun Awasthi 26:04

Crocodile skin.

Andrej 26:05

Crocodile skin, right. It's just the the texture of it is cool. And that's what I was mentioning about if it was something like that in a leather jacket. Yeah, that is cool. I guess there's certain things that looks appealing and just doesn't look appealing. I wasn't aware that the camera had?

Arjun Awasthi 26:08

That's lizard skin.

Andrej 26:21

Lizard skin, right? So it always felt different to me. But I always felt that that was not because I was trying to trick myself. I just was like, Okay, it's some kind of leather or it's some kind of fake leather. Because like now that I got the camera secondhand, not knowing I got I got it for 100 quid, and I was like, Oh, great. And I've been using it for photography ever since. I was more aware that leather, you would have like leather straps or lizard straps, or I don't know what this one would?

Arjun Awasthi 26:46

Alligator.

Andrej 26:47

Is it alligator? See, because I don't I don't think I own an alligator like straps, I wouldn't be able to tell that it's that, I would think it was something else or maybe just a design or some fake leather or something like that. It does, it does look nice. But then it just makes me think, where did they get it from? But there's only two that I actually find appealing. And that's B and C. But I already own items like that. So I'm a bit biased.

Arjun Awasthi 27:14

And what about B and C is appealing to you?

Andrej 27:17

I don't know it's just the the color on the because like it's that dark, not dark was like that vibrant brown color, which is interesting. And image C I have a camera like that, and I the sleek design of the camera, and the grip was really quite nice, because holding the camera was appealing. And then afterwards, it just doesn't look bulky or big. And the leather well the skin makes it more sleek looking.

Arjun Awasthi 27:47

So can you Is there a difference in these images in terms of whether you can identify the animal clearly or not?

Andrej 27:55

I mean, I literally got them wrong as I was thinking about them, I wouldn't be able to identify? Well not exactly the species. But yeah, you know what I mean, that you can sort of imagine that this has come from an animal? Yeah, I would think like let's say for A and D I think more reptilian because they look it's just it looks a bit scaliier. And that's why I think that okay, that's not leather its some kind of reptile. I wouldn't be able to tell about the like I said the camera I wouldn't be able to tell. But watch, I thought it

was something else entirely. I think E is also reptilian as well. So some kind of lizard or snake. Okay, so I'd be able to tell for like A, D and E I wouldn't be able to tell C and B.

Arjun Awasthi 28:39

Interesting. Yeah. And I guess how do these images make you feel when you see them?

Andrej 28:48

In my, right, I don't see the point of clothing items like A, D and E. I can justify it with let's say the camera and the watch because the camera has practical use to it. I don't think that the lizard skinning adds to the practical use but like you know, it's a practical thing. And if you want to have the lizard skin on it, go ahead. It's the same with the watch, the watch is practical. The other three seem more cosmetic, in my opinion. I don't think if your bag was made of alligator or snake or like hemp, it changes the difference. So I'd be like I don't know I'm more put off by those, but maybe it's because I already own the other two. That's why I'm trying to justify them.

Arjun Awasthi 29:36

Right. Okay, any other impressions and final impressions?

Andrej 29:40

No, that's right.

Arjun Awasthi 29:42

Well, thank you so much.

Andrej 29:44

Thank you.

Arjun Awasthi 29:44

This has been very informative. Yes.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, William

Arjun Awasthi 00:02

Excellent. Okay, so thank you so much for participating in this study. It's basically just going to be semi-structured interviews. So I have a list of questions, but based on our conversation, I may ask you other questions as well. There will be one definition that I'm going to give in the middle of it. There will be questions based off of that. And then finally, I'll show you a series of images and I'd like to get your impressions on those images. All right. So yeah, so we can get started. So to begin, can you please tell me about yourself and your background? Your age? What you do?

William 00:36

Yeah so myself in terms of what, who am I? Where I come from?

Arjun Awasthi 00:42

Yeah.

William 00:43

So my name is [William]. I grew up in my family are from Windermere in the Lake District. So a rural, rural northern England. I grew up in a relatively, you'd say relatively, I don't know, just a council estate, but it was it's a lovely area, and you wouldn't have known it. So, I suppose that shaped me in some ways, just a normal upbringing, but I was in terms of what I brought today, and kind of things of value for me, it's not the disposable quick things, particularly now that I'm a dad. It's more, I'd say that I am bound in tradition, in some ways. I like the things that are built to last and that you can keep, and I appreciate some things are more disposable and they have the benefits of that. But the item that I've got today is a watch that I bought at the end of my PhD and I'd saved, just the thing I did, every month I put a little bit of money aside, and if I want to get a nice watch, I remember at the time wanting a Rolex. Well, no, no, not a Rolex they were too common. An Omega. And, I mean, and I remember quite and the price was right. Anyway, classic watches, I still love an Omega and one day I'll have one. But I settled for a Raymond Weil, which was lovely as well. And that for me, I've had since Oh, God, when I've not graduated from my PhD, but handed in my viva, and dit it all and came to the end of it. So I've probably had it for about 10 years now. So, so yeah, so that's sort of my background really and I grew out of my rural Windermere in sort of the age of 18. Because, for me anyway, it was it was a lovely place to grow up as a young person. And then as I got older, it was great, then there's not particularly many jobs other than hospitality and tourism. It's quite limited, I want to do more. But also it is it's rarely it's fairly isolated in terms of you seeing the outside world is different if interacting with different cultures because like through in the 90s. In the school I went to it was what you consider now it's not diverse. I'll add one, one or two people who were black, I don't believe any Asians any Polish. And that's just what it was. It was a farming community. So anyway, eventually, I went on to University of Manchester. And then I stayed there for a Master's because I enjoyed it. And I did well. And I realized I could kind of study but also train physically in terms of keeping fit and playing football and then running later on. And

again, that kind of fueled my interest in certain things and objects, particularly in cycling, because cycling is one that's quite sartorial, and there are a lot of, I like cycling although I tend not to do much now apart from commuting, but the clothing you buy is lovely it's almost a [inaudible] there is a whole fashion about like specific brands like rapha and things like that. So yeah, when I'm a bit older, and again, cycling again, I do like that. And like oh, we used to have an old sort of nice, single speed bike until it was stolen in town. So yeah, then I did my PhD. So that was between, I lived between here and Chichester, and between here and Chichester, and that was in human muscular skeletal physiology. And that's when I met what is now my who is now my wife, and she's from Ireland. So again in and of itself a different culture. And after that, I suppose I got my postdoc, we knew one of us was going to have to travel so we did long distance thing, I got a postdoc up at Liverpool, but it was only a year sort of tagging on to something else. And that was fantastic. By the end of that year, I then went back to my parents and we had a long distance relationship. She worked for the NHS. Yeah, and I worked over the summer so it's quite nice. So I had a friend whose dad owned sort of fine dining sort of country inn and they did produce like eggs, chicken eggs, a brewery on it. So it's nice that I could work, all sort of prepare for interviews and go for interviews for academic positions around the UK - took a long time. So I must have had about 12 interviews all to all. And eventually I got a position in Essex and Bournemouth, Essex as part time and again, a research position tacked on to it teaching and it just would have been too much to remove further away. So I spent three years at Bournemouth University. So that's where I started my university time. Again, bit more of a postdoc and then lecturing position. And then I've been lecturing here for last four years just before the pandemic. Alright, so pretty much [inaudible]. So now, I work in the occupational therapy team, which is mainly female, which is often the case for me. My background is a non occupational therapist or someone who's not clinically trained. But I do things like anatomy and physiology research methods. But yeah, and I've got a young daughter now who's actually four was four on Sunday. And I suppose then, yeah, just suppose I've always been interested in art to an extent not anything we live here now, so my wife's from Ireland and I'm from the lakes as I've said, but we are settled here and we do have a house and we don't intend to move anytime soon. Daughter's starting school. So one of the I mean, Southampton does, does have its downside. I mean, in terms of nicer cities, one of the things that has, since we've lived in the last eight years, the culture has got a lot better in terms of the civic quarter and we often at weekends, not necessarily go, I'll go to the art gallery and we tend to go to the library with my daughter, and it's got the art gallery upstairs. And I've seen mailers on in a couple of weeks. So it's something in terms of I've always enjoyed art in terms of art school, not necessarily fashion, but I've always enjoyed fashion coming from a little town where people judge you on how you appear. And even now these things sort of bear they don't leave us because that's one of the things I do realize, and one of the reasons why I left home is to have some anonymity, because from a small village, everyone's pretty much the same. Everyone does the same, well not everyone, but a lot of it again, it's kind of unless you question those things. Why would I do? Even now my mum's had a knee replacement, and her other knee's hurting I'll get you some crutches mum or something and you can get around oh no what would people think mum it's getting around, you've got your can't. So she still has that worry that people care what she wears, what she does, and really, no one really does. And my wife was the same because she came from not rural Ireland, well, relatively rural Ireland, half an hour outside of Dublin. And that's the thing we both love where we grew up, but we'd never go back, because I'd only go back to retire in the Lake District. And likewise, she likes being away from family to an extent but keeping close because it's now nice. But yeah. I digress.

Arjun Awasthi 08:30

No, that's very fascinating, actually. Because you brought up tradition, and talking about sort of feeling bound in tradition. So I was curious to understand what do you mean by that, in the sense with relation to sort of, as you said, you know, also what will people think and judge you on how you appear? So sort of on those lines? Like what do you mean by that tradition?

William 08:54

Yeah, I suppose you'll know in terms of interviewing me, like you we are educated and question things, I suppose. Answering the question directly. I've come from a traditional background, Dad always went to work mum stayed at home three brothers, three of us two brothers. And there's a bit of a gap. So my mum did go back to work and so on. Low end labor work. When I got a bit older, cleaning that sort of thing, more just to just to keep her doing things and interested and but I suppose I've always been bound in that tradition. But in in in terms of you. Debt was never really a thing in our house. So you wouldn't buy luxury items that you couldn't afford. You had to have money [inaudible]. For me, that was almost nice, because, yeah, well, I've got this three years of this paid PhD. I'm living in somewhere where rents are relatively cheap, and I've gotten to whatever I know how I'm good at budgeting myself, why don't put this away that'd be nice, because I know at the end of it, I'll have something I'll remember and have for a long time. So I suppose that's it in terms of what I mean by tradition is I suppose I'm bound in those sort of things, you buy, what's, don't take on debt, but you buy what you can afford. But also things like, it's quite an odd thing to be able to last, the old things are built to last, which I don't know if that's true or not, but it's true of a lot of things, I would say, including houses and that it's, I would rather invest in something that has got a history behind it, it's got a good reputation like an Omega watch, like a where you think actually I can buy that and I'm buying almost into a company and a pair of Levi's are the same. That's not just going to break after a year or wear after a year, it's built to last. I suppose the difference is now that there's just much more much more, many more companies out there competing and from the stand of it keeping a business, they've got to cut costs in places. [inaudible] bikes over the years because they spend my mountain bikes in the UK recession hit in 2008. And it was interesting because it price for what you would get for a bike, the price went up for about 200 pounds, all the same components. It's just because everything costs more like we're seeing that. And that then yeah, here it is, it's a slightly different thing. But in terms of tradition, it's that it's, it's something that's built to last perhaps a classical look, again, it's lasting, and I'm not saying it's right or wrong, but it's just what I prefer. Like now when we do our house we quite like a certain style that we bought farrow & ball paint before which expensive paint it's not fantastic, but it's good, it's good. But we know it's going to be robust on the walls, if not all the walls. Okay, dulux would be another one that's a good traditional brand that you know, it's you put it on somewhere and it will look good. Yeah, I suppose that's it really. Outside of it I do like I don't know anything about art I did bits and bobs I did art upto A level at school and really enjoyed it and was quite good at it. After that in science, you tend not to do any art. So for me, it's I enjoyed doing it and now we were at God's House Tower over the weekend and you see a lot of like pottery, local, [inaudible], amazing local pottery. I really like that and I would be happy where somebody said well it's quite a lot 30 pound for a small pot, but your buying it not. It's not like going to Primark or somewhere where you've got like habitat in Sainsbury's, where, okay, it might look good, but it's not the real, it's, I mean, yeah. So for me, that's what I value probably comes from things being built to last or having a unique look about.

Arjun Awasthi 13:10

Now, that's very interesting. And actually, I'm curious to understand now, you mentioned how you saved up for this watch during your PhD. So I guess there's a lot of sentiment behind it. Right. And so if you could talk more about the value you find in having saved up to buy this, you know, luxury fashion product.

William 13:31

It's, we it's always with me, I mean, I rarely not rarely get it out, tend to get it out for weddings, celebratory events. So that's kind of what I do now as a marker. I must admit, it's more long term. So going back to your question, sorry. So in terms of you were asking in terms of what does it?

Arjun Awasthi 13:54

Right, so what does it represent for you?

William 13:57

Okay, yeah. So that, to me represents perseverance, hard work. It represents a journey, because ultimately wasn't just about hard work. It's about it reminds me of my wife. Because we were together halfway between my PHD, midway between my PhD and again, that was part of it. I must admit I can't even remember when I bought it. It's no wonder though, is that why would you remember it? No, I don't. I just remember buying it and then it'd been treasured. It's slightly different now because to me that something more of a long term, whereas I might buy something more mid term luxury, like a smartphone, or this G shock watch my wife bought me and it got about five years now and again, the nice thing about G Watch, it's more sporty. It's not gonna break and the battery runs out every five years or whatever. So for me, I look at this every day and think I like this watch, or I like these nike trainers whereas, necessarily, I don't look at that every day. So my memories are probably not as strong. Because it's just always there to keep in my bottom drawer, as I say, I just know when it's weddings, celebratory events, mum's anniversary the other week, get it out and itself, you need to wind it yourself. So it's kind of that old, its got a traditional side of it. So yeah, to me, it just it tells me those things really. It does make me think about time as well. It's not why I bought it, obviously, it just makes me think about passing time. And as I say, it's probably been up 10 years, if not longer, since I bought it now.

Arjun Awasthi 15:40

But if I'm safe to assume it sounds like it's something that you aspired to it was sort of a goal that you set for yourself?

William 15:48

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 15:48

Would you agree with that?

William 15:49

Yeah, and I think that, for me, personally, it doesn't, not everyone gets the same thing, but I do like a bit of delayed gratification and I suppose I've learned over the years to not get too focused on that because if you think about things too much, you think, I'll put it off and then enjoy it later, you don't get as it it's not a thing, but for me, that was something that it was worth saving for and I knew I would have it for a long time. I think and I would do it again and it's almost a behavior that it's got in me that now that I do see things. What I've got on my mind recently? oh, just a research paper, got a research paper we worked a hell of a lot on revising and shaping and it seemed to take a long time. Back in review again, I think, next one, I've worked hard this year, because we've got a few grants that have come up, PhD students doing really well. I think I've not really, you do lots of filler stuff, especially when you have kids and you travel back to Ireland. It's lovely. Like, don't get me wrong, but it's almost not not forever traveling not like before the pandemic, everytime I travel I get like, oh, like it's easy to get a nice coffee now again, I suppose it's sounds really corny but a decade ago, when I wouldn't have had this wouldn't have had as much money, maybe go to Costa maybe once a week or something. Whereas now, it's totally different as well that people take things more on credit now and student debts completely different. So you, whereas something like this for me at the moment I'm just thinking at the end of summer, when I get this paper published I might treat myself I might get myself a bit of artwork for a wall or against something that I know I can save for. The only difference now as I say I'm much more comfortable, we're much more comfortable financially because me and my wife we've got jobs, we own a house, we're paying but I mean it's the it's not, as visible now, because in many ways, we've got savings so I could buy another one of those, another two of those another three and it wouldn't really matter that much. And I'm not by any means I'm not wealthy, and brother-in-law, my wife's brother lives in Luxembourg, and he went to a university, it wasn't a fantastic university, did the right degree. Him and his wife and worked in London for a few years she was a solicitor he worked as like a bailiff basically, when Ireland went bankrupt his name for a [inaudible] kind of getting the assets back. So I don't think it was maybe both solicitors anyway, moved up to Luxembourg she got a very good job they then split up sadly. But he still lives out there now and we go to visit him. He's like I just treated myself to a suit and it's absolutely just his lifestyle is, we've got two kids between, we do still see each other but, god you know, Steven, well the other weekend he just did a triathlon and I'm looking at him on this bike and that's a trek I don't even know how much they cost now but you're talking about eight grand, and you're thinking? yeah, and he's very relaxed he's very good at sort of courting people and that's what he does with his job with his clients and things but that that to us and we're not sort of envious of that, but, because his life's not perfect by any means but it gets to that level where perhaps you can't maybe you can but it just has to be bigger things and then you think why do I need bigger things because I say at the moment in this summer, I would like to get something, picture, a nice picture for the wall might be a 300 pound it's if by an individual artists a small one might be about 400 pounds. But yeah, well I'm willing to do it again because it is it's nice because it stays with you and that's why I like pictures in terms of art on the wall. I've got a few from local artists and I don't know if you know there's a place called Bedford Place well Bedford Place down in town. There's an old, they do framing service and it's expensive, like a frame will cost basic about 50 pound but I 've done it before that was a couple of years ago. I won a grant as an ECR. I thought "oh that's really nice". I want something a bit of artwork for a wall. It's nice and local artist, and that lovely watercolor of the New Forest, bought it and then got it framed and yeah, it was really really another kind of painting and people are like that's quite a lot for a frame, could you have not just gone to IKEA? I could but if I'm buying something like picture

that's, you individually produce, and I like it I don't want to just slap it in an Ikea frame. So sometimes matching it.

Arjun Awasthi 20:37

No, that makes complete sense. And when actually you've answered quite a few of the questions already, but I think I'm gonna go back to asking you a very basic one. What do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

William 20:57

No. Luxury fashion, how would you define luxury fashion?

Arjun Awasthi 21:01

Right, So anything. It's the thing is it's difficult to define luxury fashion in the sense that it doesn't necessarily have to be price prohibitive but it can generally be anything that seems more than, if you know what I mean. It seems like.

William 21:20

Relative to me?

Arjun Awasthi 21:22

Right, right. It can come across as an indulgence, right? And obviously, fashion includes accessories, so we're talking shoes, belts, wallets, watches, you know, bags, whatever you may have cameras even.

William 21:38

Yeah, right? ok. Yeah. I know the one. It did at one time, but not so much, when me and my wife owned that when we first sort of maybe one that she always wanted we didn't quite get then that again, maybe when when we were a bit [inaudible], a Mulberry bag. So I'm sure you've been to John Lewis, they've got the women's bag section it's got lovely bags from right from simple basic ones, to the likes of mulberry ones that are perhaps 1000 pounds, whatever, smallish leather bags, whole bag. I can't remember what she bought in the end. But again, that was another one when we were after my PhD, when I had my postdoc, and we're both working so our first jobs. I probably was more interested in it. But then I think by the time you, since buying a house that takes away quite a proportion. So if you're thinking of like a pie chart of your whatever, your income when you own a house it's different because when you rent in, you're just forever moving or everything's temporary. So it for for me at that time, because our environment, living environment was temporary. It was nice to buy things like tha and I think my wife was the same because she bought an iPad, when she you know, sort of first month of pay or whateve and still got it to this day. It's broken. But yeah, and mulberry bag was one that we kind of did she buy? Sorry, no, it's no a different bag wasn't quite mulberry but it's still a good bag. I wouldn't say it interests me as much now just because, as I say when for us anyway, when we sort of bought a house, there's lots to do in the garden, there's things to do in the house. So you perhaps disposable incomes not as much as and you've got permanent place. It's nice, because in some ways, that's a security I mean, by all means if I won a good amount of money I'd probably buy a Hugo Boss suit our a lovely, a lovely tailored suit. And likewise, I would like an Omega speed, speed master at some point in my life, but I think sometimes I have respect for it, but I think it can be quite superfluous and the other

thing as well I have a daughter. Nursery fees so nursery fees are high relatively in Europe and they've come down a lot because she's four and going to school so if compared to what we paid originally not not much now, about 70% less. But it is all those things that for me that comes a little bit after, I do still value it, but I probably value people relationships and the outdoors more, if I'm honest, and I do spend quite a lot of time outdoors and for that I particularly go back to the Lake District and that's very different. Different now to when I was younger, just because we've got a bigger population. More people I suppose affluent from Manchester, Liverpool or surrounding cities go out there and even buy second homes. A lot of Landrovers you do see a lot of well dressed people, do a lot of them go to actually go to the outdoors? Not sure as many as you would expect, love and just go to have fancy meals and then stay in a nice hotel by the lake and whatever and again, what people choose they want to do. But for me, it's not. Spending time in the outdoors, yes, you can be well dressed, but it's not luxury, you wouldn't be going luxury items when out, especially when you've got a young toddler as well, who just gets stuff on everything. So this point my life, no, but that's not to say when I'm in my 50s and all I was a bit older, that I wouldn't, it wouldn't be. And there's definitely things that I would love because the things I tend to buy are luxury and the things I value anyway, so watches and shoes. Because you look after your feet. I work with podiatrists and not that they tell you, but it's actually you spend most of the time in your day on your feet and I used to have a pair of Italian shoes, and they were lovely and now when I buy trainers, I like trainers, are comfortable. Not always fashionable, but they are comfortable like good solid Nike, Hoka or whatever it is. But yeah, in terms of luxury things I must admit they're out for me they are superfluous at this point in my life.

Arjun Awasthi 26:27

Fair, enough. But I'm actually intrigued by this, because you mentioned long lastingness and you mentioned, you know, that things that are built to last, basically. So how important is the brand reputation and the status symbol associated with these products?

William 26:49

Very high, I would say. I don't have to have had that brand before owned it, but I do. It needs to tell me something about the brand and its values and I don't think about that directly. I don't look at an Omega watch and think, you know what? I know what the Omega values of the maker are. It's just the fact that having been around their timeless they've been around for years. So I keep making bad puns about watches. It's just classic. But growing up I would watch things like media like TV, like James Bond and things and he had Omega Speedmaster or whatever it was. Then the moon landings is Omega they went up there with a camera, what that was CMAT ? anyway, Omega? I'm waffling on? To me, they tell me something that it's part of history in them as well. But again, I know less about Raymond Weil, but I know enough about it. Nike would be one that there are lots of others out there and I don't always buy a Nike by any means but I've been up to Oregon before and I remember visiting one summer when I worked out there visiting where they all kind of set up Nike and things and that was interesting. New Balance are one that not a lot of people know this but they were set up in North of England in Cumbria so not far from where I live. And that's one now it's been nice to see that they've gone from an okay running trainer to a really fashionable trainer. What do good running trainers as well. So I own a pair of New Balance I own a pair of New Balance running trainers and to me I think well that's me giving back to a local company. Even though they're probably owned by someone else somewhere, I could now, it's it's, so I must admit there's an element of, I'll try not to overanalyze things

too much and I just think look if that's the brand that I've seen has been around for a time and they, based on other people's reputation, so for example, it might be that it's a Hollister or something like, [inaudible] got a really nice shirt and they do really nice fits. Yeah, that's it. All right. Okay, so I'm gonna actually ask you something related to ... Okay, so you mentioned obviously, the prohibitive aspect of having to consider your home, education, all of that. So you're not, you know, the pie chart example that you're giving. But let's say that money was not an object. All right. So then, if you had the chance to obtain a luxury item, such as maybe a handbag or a wallet or a belt or watch that was made from exotic skin, and by exotic skin, I mean, snake, alligator crocodile, lizard, that sort of thing. Would you so not necessarily buying it yourself, maybe even being gifted it? Would you consider owning it? No.

Arjun Awasthi 30:01

Okay, why?

William 30:02

Absolutely not. I'm quite. I'm animal friendly. No, I just don't think to me they will be values I don't support I don't think I've ever owned anything like that, my wife I don't think has any. I mean no, absolutely no, no because I just think an animal has died in vain to go on the back of someone's neck or on someone's trousers I mean it's the moral side of it because it's, I suppose farming animals to eat is different to then using them to where I just think it's a bit barbaric to me doesn't resonate with what my values are either because I don't I wouldn't agree with any of that. Different if it's used, I used to, when I used to play football, my younger my youth, that was probably a small scale each year you would, mum would normally buy them but when I got a job part time at weekends. You'd then save up over the summer to buy a pair of football boots. And I remember that that is always crocodiles, not crocodile skin. Anyway, this is a type of leather and they always said it was crocodile leather it wasn't crocodile leather but that's probably the closest I ever came to it. And it was very comfortable. Well, no, I would never consider it.

Arjun Awasthi 31:37

So I guess, if you wouldn't consider yourself but what do you think about them? Why do you think people buy these products?

William 31:46

Oh, people buy them probably because it's a similar, it's unique, it's a status symbol trying to sort of second guess. Unique would be the main one. It looks luxurious I'm just thinking about like a feather boa or something like that. And I think they were relatively, probably relatively rare, because you know, it's completely different now that people are much more conscious about sustainability and things and it wouldn't, it wouldn't matter in terms of Prada or someone doing it, there would be absolutely, the stocks are tank. So I don't think it would be I don't think it would be possible now for people to do that. In a westernized economy, so I just think it's for Yeah, for an individual doing it. I just think it would be purely a statement of individuality and uniqueness. It's all I can really think so they wouldn't be saying look, I've killed a killed a, someone's killed an alligator but I mean if someone likes it wouldn't be more this is a one off piece.

Arjun Awasthi 33:10

Yeah, that's really interesting, actually, to hear your perspective. My, My other question was sort of related to this. I mean, obviously you do not buy these products yourself but again, I mean, what do you think people think is appealing about exotic skin products? What is it what is appealing about them and and how do they sort of justify their behavior, buying it?

William 33:35

What's appealing about them? Again, I can't, I'm not offering it from my perspective, I can't see through their eyes but like, for me, what will be appealing about them would be the durability, not necessarily comfort. I'm just thinking if it's an animal's skin, it would, you would expect it to be durable as long as it fits. It would be as I said before the unique aspect of it. I wouldn't say the novelty because I think if you're getting the luxury item you're not looking for novelty per say, so I think it'd be the individualism and the unique side of it. And I also think it would be ... what's the [inaudible] I just I just can't, some kind of ownership that then again, this might be someone's perspective, I can't that's why I'm struggling to vocalize it because I could never ever think that way is I own this animal or man runs and tames the wild, the white race, I don't know. I think the closest I've ever come we used to be round Chichester, there's some really good charity shops. And there are like Midhurst bits of West Sussex. And there's what I think is Midhurst we used to go in its great, just out of interest because it's relatively wealthy area I think it's between Midhurst and Petworth, the things you would get in there are just fantastic just like these old leather jackets and bomber jackets and things. And I'm sure going in now I'll seem, definitely seeing some animal fur looked very 70s like and it's probably been sat in some, some some woman's loft for the last 20 years. And yeah, that's all, as I say, that's all I can really offer for that one to see. For me, it's more of a 70s and 80s luxury item. luxury items. Let's seen, much, much less common last time I saw.

Arjun Awasthi 35:56

Well, let's okay, so

William 35:57

What about faux? What about fake? Is that? Are you?

Arjun Awasthi 36:02

I'm not asking about fake.

William 36:03

Okay. No.

Arjun Awasthi 36:06

But no, it's interesting, because I saw obviously your values are a certain way that you are not going to buy it yourself. But what if somebody were to gift you something? How would you feel about it? Or if you inherited it, say, for example, as a legacy thing?

William 36:29

I'll probably, I wouldn't question the person, I wouldn't judge them because they inherited it from a different time. And that's the thing, you have to be careful because I was just thinking [inaudible] I'm not

going to, who would it be? Either my mother in law or my mum and I wouldn't judge them. I would just my honest initial reaction would just be thanks, but no thanks. I'm going to go home and sell it because I'd feel like black market, how do you? How do you then sell those items, particularly in two days? Again, society that values sustainability, climate change, all those sort of things, it would almost be like a black mark, I'd probably take it to a charity shop, because that's a place where everything anonymously, I could hand it in and be free of it. But I would think that the person handing it over, I would never ever guilt them because you would presume it had been purchased in a time that things were, social mores were completely different, attitudes are completely different. The world was different. So, yeah I wouldn't judge I would just feel I wouldn't feel disgusted it really I just feel thanks but how do I get rid of that? So it's terrible, but it's probably me trying, tells you probably something about me that I'm not trying to escape from things a lot. But [inaudible], not not but yeah, just would think maybe I would be a bit awe-, not awestruck. Awestruck, is not the right word. I would be a bit intrigued, I think where would that come from? What stories can that tell me? I probably would actually, trying to think last time someone, rarely inherit anything worth, well I'm trying to think last time we had, a picture, my wife Sarah's grandmama grandmother died probably about six years ago and she was in a care, fit lady, but she was in a care home probably for last, in Dublin, for the last six years, seven years of her life and lived on 90 but a fit 90 and very sharp up here and she got into art, well no, she was always quite good at drawing and she was, and out, she walked a lot hillwalking and stuff and she brought the kids up and in her later years she anyway drew and a lot of the pictures were like any amateur artists. Nice, but you wouldn't put one your home, she has won in a place called Glendalough in Kildare in Ireland and we've got that in the office because it's not like it's not the sort of thing you put in your front room. But it is nice just to have in the office and it's, again you, and I remember getting that and it does it makes you think what where's this been? Or what's this person seeing? It does make you try to think from their perspective. So I probably would do that. If someone did give me, let's say, a belt that was sharkskin belt, or whatever it was. I would try to think I wonder what this is saying or where this has been? I've got quite an, I like reading, and I've probably said before that the James Bond and Ian Fleming books spy books that I used to read, haven't read them for quite a few years. The holiday books where you can just your mind gets cast away. I like those that put you back into another time. So when things were done differently with different attitudes, and that's why James Bond is very good, because a lot of the books are, he is a sexist, bigot, but again, it was the time it's the 60s 70s, and the other one less so American Psycho, which was quite a satiric but fantastic bit of literature, but that's one where I don't know if you've read it, I recommend it. Fantastic because the way the author writes, it focuses on minutia. So everything from the card he's got that's embossed to, and obviously the stories around that. But that's what Ian Fleming did with a James Bond novels and almost spent half a page or a page describing the way he shaves and things and yeah, I just I would try to think of it as past times, and what people might have done and seen and experienced in those times as opposed to now, which it can be easy to judge.

Arjun Awasthi 41:09

Alright so I'm going to shift gears a little bit and ask a few questions about the wildlife trade, actually. So how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products are sourced?

William 41:23

Illegally? Um, I would suspect illegally but then again, it's more like if Prada was to say we've got this, I think they can't be doing illegally because you would then presume a farm some sort. And again, that's got a lot of, a huge ethical, though the moral implication is that you're breeding animals just to kill for people to wear. So if it's a recognized name doing it, I would immediately think you've got you must have to have some kind of farm doing it. If it was just an item of clothing, I would think it's poachers. And it's illegally done, especially now. I wouldn't necessarily think about them breeding animals to kill them, but I would if it's an established name.

Arjun Awasthi 42:12

And do you know anything about the wildlife trade? Is so what do you know?

William 42:16

Very little all I've known is from charities at zoos before and like the world, WWE, World Wildlife Federation. World Wildlife Federation WWF?

Arjun Awasthi 42:29

Yes.

William 42:34

I must admit, I know very little and I am very eco-conscious. But I'm also aware that any charity will try to spin things to make a case. And we do as academics to write grants, you have to sort of make a convincing argument. And it's often I can't remember where we're at now. Recently, the species are on the Red List and I'm sure they are but equally I just don't know. I don't know, it's difficult isn't it? Just I can't say I've even noticed that much information apart from there is normally associated with China, India, parts of Russia. I can't say it's something that piques my interest in the news now because it's more about climate and its abuse and, but yes, straightaway I would think yeah, India, Africa, China, parts of China so that might be a racist element to it all the way we're kind of things are portrayed because normally you see an animal dead inside like a cage that looks like a zoo and that'd be like the media campaign. Tusks was a big one wasn't it? I remember growing up in the 90s it was quite for the tusk trade and particularly in Japan, whale fishing. I can't say I've ever seen any of it myself. But I'm not massively widely traveled in terms of been to Africa, but yeah, I suppose yeah, those are places.

Arjun Awasthi 44:19

Yeah, no, that's, that's sufficient. That's great. So now I'm going to read our definition. So of course, you haven't bought these products that are made of exotic skin, but then you have bought a watch you have bought certain luxury products. So this is going to sort of relate to your purchasing alright. So there is a concept which you may be familiar with known as cognitive dissonance, which is basically, it's a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So, basically, it would be like sort of, if you have a petrol guzzling car, but you are really into sustainability, you would sort of say, well, my value is that I'm into sustainability, my behavior is that I drive this car. So actually, I'm going to change my behavior, I'm still going to drive the car, but I'm also going to recycle, because it's going to offset it. So then you sort of still can consolidate your values, that sort of thing.

William 45:26

Okay so it's like smoking, knowing causes lung disease, but then say, I'm going to take, walk more often without getting off fresh air.

Arjun Awasthi 45:35

Exactly. So you're resolving that cognitive dissonance behavior by performing a behavior that offsets those kind of things. So have you experienced any discomfort when you have bought, say, this watch or luxury product? And if you have felt that discomfort, how did you eliminate it?

William 45:57

Yeah, I mean, I'm quite parsimonious. And as I say, I'm from a, not a poor background, by any by any means, but not particularly wealthy, I would always, I still did now feel of guilt of shit I've spent thr money. I don't know where it comes from, because my wife thinks ludicrous. The worry that I'm not going to get paid the next moment, it's probably doing a PhD for three years. And it's really weird, because I'm just trying to shake it for years. I still, again, it's partly, not my values, because my family weren't tight, but it's kind of parsimonious is a better word. So I suppose I offset it by, When did a lot of buy luxury item? Buy something? That's fantastic. And there's a part of me straightaway, like, should you have bought that? That's quite expensive. I had to buy a belt a couple of months ago, it was nice. Yeah, and it does take the fun out of it a little bit. But I think that's really just me personally, that I think about the money side of things, well actually I spent less this week. And that's typically that behavior I do. Like for another one, a while ago, I may cut it now but I went to a gents hairdressers, that's that's relatively expensive, and just a single guy who does them. Just small places, quite esteemed. And I'll go and cut my hair really, really nice. And then it did make, it did a did react in that way coming out thinking afterwards that's really, really nice. But it costs you this much of that, stop, stop! I like my hair and feeling quite good. It cost you this much would you go again? Would you go again, we probably wouldn't go again, because it's nice. But is it a luxury I can afford? I can afford it. But I'd rather spend my money elsewhere. And that's kind of the thought process I go for I can maybe spend elsewhere. Actually, I could have spent my money by doing could have gone out for coffee, I could have done, and you see how you kind of enjoyment then diminishes because you're overthinking it. And that's typically what I do. I don't know how to get over it, as I say, I'll buy an item but then I must ringfence money, right? How much and it goes back to PhD thing where how much money we got for the rest of the month? Not that I was ever poor in the PhD. But the kind of thing that you get paid for the month, you rent and then always I was that person, make sure the rent goes out first then you get paid around the rent time, then, you know how much you're going to spend weekly shopping each week. So for me, that would be the thing. And as I say when I, so I am different every occasion, the longer term ones, I tend not to think about because I think no, I've worked hard for that and I've planned for that and for me budgeting and that. Anyway, that has almost been planned long term. And I think that can be the same for anything like their used to be, sadly closed now, but the black rat was a Michelin restaurant up in Winchester. When I got the job here that's how we celebrated, me and my wife went up and it was absolutely fantastic and it was just like an old rickety, if it's still open, look it up. It's fantastic. You have to like book in two months in advance and it was just a really, really, really nice experience and never regretted any of it. And for me, that was probably because we booked in two months in advance and it was a life change of me getting a job here. So it's like right, that is that is something that I I mean it can

relate to this because the the menu is locally sourced within South Hampshire and Dorset I think and it was a really sort of thing where you could really enjoy the wine you're drinking my middle brother is a chef so and I've worked in some restaurants that [inaudible] students before and things like that. I'm not good in any, I don't know, profess to know a lot but again, it's one of the fine things I do enjoy that we never go out now because we've got a daughter. Yeah, but to me that would be that the cognitive dissonance would be then typically those mid-short term mid item, mid term items will be. Right, what can you cut down for the rest of the week to kind of make yourself even again, even doesn't really even exist? Yeah, well, if it's a bigger, longer term, I tend not to worry too much in terms of moral morality. I don't really think about it but that might reflect the items I buy like a watch kind of thing. Just that it's sad, well, it's not sad I just think you see it in news a lot at the moment. There's a lot of big things in the world, you can only have enough energy to care and fight certain things and again, now we've got a daughter and a family, partly to protect myself in terms of work and mental health also my daughter in terms of us having a proper family. Yes, it's a climate problem, but do what you can do and not worry about every little cup. Again, that's I do try to carry it carry cup with me and everything and use panniers to do all right stuff equally enough to fly for work. airplanes, and that's one of the biggest emission. I think that's fine, but I'm not going to feel guilty. So yeah, I would never in terms of an item, I must admit, I can't be arsed thinking about its carbon footprint, which I'm sure some people do because I just think that's all good but when you've got countries that are producing emissions sky high, the NHS wastes an absolute, My wife works for the NHS, so you just see, and we I think it's a drop in the ocean.

Arjun Awasthi 52:00

Right. And actually, interestingly, I was thinking it's not part of the interview guide. But you obviously these big watch companies like Omega, Rado Seiko, all of that, so they do have watch straps that are made from exotic skins. So crocodile alligator, other things like that. And they are quite popular. So in a sense, if you are buying

William 52:28

Yeah, I'm buying into the brand.

Arjun Awasthi 52:29

In a way, Yeah.

William 52:31

Okay. Yeah. No, I always thought it was faux.

Arjun Awasthi 52:37

They do make faux stuff as well. Yeah. But they do have the genuine

William 52:40

The high end.

Arjun Awasthi 52:41

Right.

William 52:41

Yeah, just I must never look out for that much now. Because it's, I tend to if I do shopping because it's nice. I mean, West Quay on your doorstep. And that's got loads of things in there, but yeah, I'll look out for that. I just think of you're like, like a rock star in the 1980s. So rock star and leather crocodile pants can't remember who it was? Probably someone like Bon Jovi or someone like that. But anyhow.

Arjun Awasthi 53:13

Alright so, related to what you said, as you said, you know, it's a drop in the ocean and there's so many other things to consider that you really can't focus on every small thing. But have you faced any ethical concerns when buying certain products? And Did you face any sort of moral dilemma? You did talk a little bit about morality as well.

William 53:35

Ethical concerns when buying products such as?

Arjun Awasthi 53:39

Well, luxury products. Yeah.

William 53:41

Not necessarily. Okay, that might be just me because I don't buy that many, but my wife, yeah, we tend to, like my wife likes her clothes quite a lot, but she tends to get a lot of vinted now. Okay. I'm trying to think the last big item that she got. Yeah, I can't, I'm just going through my. No, the big thing, the big thing in terms of the morality side of it is, again, I tend not to think about the work as too much. Patrick Gant, I was reading an article of his in he's a tailor, Savile Row tailor tailor guy who opened a factory in Blackburn. So, I read an article his in The Times or Guardian a couple of weekends, but that was really interesting. I really did like it. And he's sort of anti fast fashion. Not necessarily luxury items, but a whole thing built to last, and he's now set up a factory in Blackburn and employs God knows how many people but there, I looked at their website and their decent nice clothes but his whole thing is you buy an item of clothing you keep it until, for a long time. I must, in terms of work houses, I never really think about that. Although I remember doing it in primary school doing English and we had to kind of again break down newspaper articles and it was at a time when no, it wasn't Benetton. No, I'd call it Benetton, sweatshops, It went, Nike, Nike sweatshops! That was a big thing, wasn't it? It was all about the sweatshops in Cambodia and those sort of practices. Again, I tend not to think about that, now, Again, just because it's probably bigger things and more things. I think there's a lot of people on earth sadly, that you can worry about everyone all the time. So in terms of the luxury items we bought recently, like, a couple of years ago, my wife bought a nice bag, never thought about it, we, she did, her brother, the one who lives in Luxembourg he actually, he gave her a lovely purse. I can't remember what it was, a gift he had bought for his girlfriend and then she'd already had one or something like that. And it was a lovely, she's still got it now. A lovely women's sort of clutch purse. Can't remember what the brand it is. Yeah, that's just wow, that's really smart! Oh, and you [inaudible] when you see something like that and it's yours, it's like pretty nice that. Well, that's pretty Yeah. Pretty cool. And again, she's had it for about six years now. It's absolutely, I mean, she uses it when she goes to Ireland. So again, that's her thing. So she goes back to Ireland, she puts the Irish Euros in it. And that's what we use. I can't remember what brand it is. But yeah, it's a lovely red wallet. Yeah. And I've got some Italian shoes that I've had

probably a decade. I had them before I was kind of had responsibilities like a mortgage, care and the young one in nursery. And again, that was no second guess about it. Just bought it same with these Nikes. I won't say they are luxury, they are good trainers. Did I think about Nike sweatshops when I bought it? No.

Arjun Awasthi 53:41

So you wouldn't necessarily say it's like an impulse buy. But it's just something that you want it and you just got it. That sort of

William 57:21

Which one?

Arjun Awasthi 57:22

The shoes, for example.

William 57:24

Yes, but I was a different person and so it's more, it's like that summer, I was saying I spent in America, that we were basically like a summer camp type thing, you can paid quite a good amount stayed with a family, we paid about \$200 a week. And it was at a time, years ago when it was a two to one to the pound, so you got really good, so long story short, came to the end of it. I had a week off was traveling around went up to Vancouver and you just had all this expendable cash and it's great, because I'm not going to change it and take it home I'm gonna buy presents. So it's literally like being in Home Alone or something. That's really the only time in my life where I've had a money just in my wallet, just thinking I've got to use all this in two days, off today. And it's really lovely you know and I can actually now think about it actually was really nice just not to care and give a shit. And that's probably what people do, saying when you see a lot of nice fast cars coming in through Portswood or Highfield I kind of think if I had a car like that I'd drive it fast. So, yeah, going back on to your question I wouldn't say, yeah, just my impulse.

Arjun Awasthi 58:36

That's fine. Alright, I'm gonna go back to something that you had mentioned earlier, which was when you spoke about how there are farming animals that are to eat and then there are other animals. So my question is, how do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

William 58:54

Heavily now. Again, it's probably because I've got a daughter as well and I want to instill good values in her. It's also because I suppose it's things that you gravitate to and I don't know if it's the pandemic or the climate change issues. Pandemic we spent more time at home but equally we spent more time outdoors as well. I'm a country boy so I've always valued those sort of things, bear in mind, country boy but a lot of friends would have had farms and still do have farms up there, so it's if you were to scrutinize things then they probably would have been like most farmers are, probably doing things unsustainably at certain times. I never really think about that. I just think, Just going back to your question again, sorry, what was the?

Arjun Awasthi 59:52

No, basically your feelings towards animals? How do they influence your purchasing behaviour?

William 59:57

Yeah, so heavily I would say if it's a It's a big factor. Probably major factor I'd be torn, if I saw, don't know if I'm saying is, if I saw something I really, really liked and then you would say afterwards, three animals are killed in making that. Would it stop me from buying it? Perhaps not, if I really liked it. If you said 10 or 20 odd in practice that they did systemically, probably, I don't know how much of it being a hypocrite because I'm honest, I think it's easy for me to say now. But I think, again, like when you're saying someone gifts, you a really lovely item. I think there's an element where you just think it's the enjoyment of it. I don't really care about the adverse of all the cows being killed, it's terrible and I know that I am someone who's very sort of I don't like killing animals, I don't like bugs and thing, and I always try to put spiders out the window I don't swat them because their getting the flies as well, anyway. But yeah, but if I'm honest, I probably just think of the item.

Arjun Awasthi 1:01:15

Right. Right. Exactly. Because the reason why I'm curious to know this is it seems that one does end up compartmentalizing. So there are certain animals that are meant to be eaten. And then there are certain animals that are pets. And then there are certain animals that can be used to make leather. So do you sort of think in that sort of way as well?

William 1:01:44

Probably because you've said it, I just tend to think there's

Arjun Awasthi 1:01:50

Sorry it wasn't meant to be leading question.

William 1:01:52

No, no, I'm just trying to think. Not necessarily I'm kind of coming from a dad's perspective at the moment. Zoo animals, native animals, like birds, whatever we have in our garden, foxes. Yeah, no, I tend to think of more kind of geographically based, so like so if they're in a zoo they're foreign animals, ones foxes, rabbits wherever you're going. So yeah, I tend to think more that way. Okay. Okay. I never really had pets well we used to have guinea pigs and rabbits. But that was when I was young.

Arjun Awasthi 1:02:32

Well that was gonna be my next question was if you have pets, does having a pet companion influence your purchasing decisions?

William 1:02:40

Our dog passed away last year, we were always we like dogs and things but no.

Arjun Awasthi 1:02:45

Okay, that's fine. All right. So I'm sort of wrapping up now with the questions, but I am going to show you some images. But before I show you these images, is there anything else you'd like to add? About

your attitudes towards your experiences with luxury fashion products? Do you have any final thoughts? Have you missed seeing anything?

1:03:03

No I think I'm cool with everything I can think of I've probably spoken far too much, but yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 1:03:09

Oh no, that's see as a qualitative researcher, we love that because that's more data to go through. So that's fantastic. Alright, so these are five images of items that are made from exotic skins. They're all luxury fashion items. So have a look at them and sort of take your time to develop your impressions. And then I'm going to ask you to sort of talk about what images you found appealing, what you didn't find appealing, and yeah related concepts to that so yeah yeah, feel free to just go through them.

1:03:51

Do you want me to just talk over them?

Arjun Awasthi 1:04:30

If you can and so they are labelled so you can use that as well. So image A I'm attracted to it on view from afar. I think it's because the fact that it's black. It's less obvious. Then getting closer you can see there's definitely a reptile skin, it's hard because it's not flagrant colours on as I say obvious it's for me that will be one of the better objects here, items here, because it is more subtle and less garish. Item B, I do like it but I mean it's personal preference I don't like leather straps anywhere and watches I prefer just metal but in terms of ignoring that it's a lovely watch and again it is much for me that is much more subtle because I couldn't picture what animal that's coming from. Okay.

William 1:05:42

Image A looks like I've given it much more thought and probably too much thought probably like a black manga or some type of black snake. Image B I have absolutely no idea which makes it you know while that's probably could just be fake that's all right or take out or not fake or replica of some sort but it's still good leather I would happily have that watch. Image C is lovely that's one I forgot to do like cameras a lot I don't have one anymore, apart from smartphones, but again very subtle. It's balanced this time with a lot of metal and actually the technical sides of the camera so the lens the shutters the mount it's on so for me that will be a lesser of evils it would be it's fairly subtle and again I can't imagine what it's from. Image D just well I can see I've read it crocodile and without reading it I thought its either crocodile or an alligator or something like that it's awful. Yeah, it's I mean it's not my taste by any mean. And it's also the thing I did notice is the fact that has a padlock around it padlock suggests that items in his bag are very very expensive. That's what the wearer is telling a person so it's almost a statement in itself it's a look this is a rare and expensive bag it's sourced from a Himalayan, well you wouldn't know its a Himalayan crocodile but also I'm worth it because this bag contains a lot of money I've got a padlock on it. That's the way I look at that. For me it looks like something should belong in a museum but I can appreciate if you're in a city like I don't know, Lisbon in Rome or London central London somewhere somewhere really that's a high fashion Madrid you might not bat an eye if some ladies walking down the street with it. The carry one image E is it's more obvious it does looks to me that is a classic luxury item that's made of animal it is slightly more obvious but I don't know if that's because it's a belt and I a

good belt attracts people's vision because ultimately it is around your waist and it looks good and it's doing a job but it is it's an accessory it's luxury, luxury accessory. So in terms of preference I think C would be my most preferable followed by E because I think it is quite subtle even though it draws the eye in then image A then B and then D and the reason for that is subtlety balanced with color. I know I said image A was just dull in colour black not dull but black, but looking back at it I suppose it's the shininess and it is, obviously you think actually that's probably a lot of animal that's gone on to that, that was terrible. The belts probably less animal same with the same with the camera. So they are my perspectives on those.

Arjun Awasthi 1:09:21

No, but it is very interesting because the camera is actually lizard skin. So that's the grip on the camera. The watch strap is alligator and the rest they are all crocodile. Yeah. It is very interesting, though, that you noted the subtlety of it and the balance. So it sort of seems as though you would be more attracted to products that aren't obviously screaming that they're an animal.

William 1:09:27

Okay. And that might go back to what I was saying growing up in a village where everyone knows your business and what you wear and we come from. Yeah, because that's probably a part of it because it's just that's the other thing is where my mother in law saying they lived half an hour from Dublin, they would regularly go into Dublin, and they were probably more poor than us Ireland was poor but they, the difference was because my wife said to me you never used to go to art galleries or your mom never take you? Are you joking? Art galleries? We never went to one, because we went downtown with my daughter, your mummy used to take you and your youngest brother to art galleries? Oh, sometimes in Dublin. I said yeah but we didn't have a city like that on our doorstep, you wouldn't, you would have drove an hour and a half to Manchester or Liverpool or even forty minutes to Lancaster if you were to come to Lancaster, which is forty minutes, to do shopping, and it would have been your Christmas money. Whereas for them being closer to a capital, again my mother-in-law, Sarah's mum's very fashionable she likes dressing differently, and not necessarily expensive clothes, but she's quite she trials with what she wears. She's like a six, no, she's this seventy year old woman she might have a jumpsuit on and things but she's got the humor to pull it off. And she's she's whereas my mother wouldn't wouldn't judge her but she would just, I can't wear something like that. So, I suppose it's that in terms of coming from somewhere small, rural and isolated.

Arjun Awasthi 1:11:32

It's very sort of exactly as you were saying. It's it's conformity. Yeah. You don't want to stick out

William 1:11:40

And that's why we love it now because my daughter goes to nursery here and it's fantastic. So, I do the pick up with the dads and mums. Indian, Irish, Spanish we [inaudible] those things, actually not that many English parents it's lovely because you just get smart and so same with the school she's going to just a real mix of, she doesn't know any different and it's fantastic. So that's my bit on those items.

Arjun Awasthi 1:12:09

Yeah, excellent. Well, that's that then like you know, thank you very much.

William 1:12:19

Go ahead and making the most of the quiet time where we've got meetings and things of that and then in office, just

SPEAKERS

Ahmad, Ahmad

Arjun Awasthi 00:01

Brilliant. All right, so thank you so much for participating in the study, I'm going to be asking you a series of questions about luxury fashion consumption, and your purchasing behavior. So it's going to be semi structured interviews. So I have a list of questions, but then based on our conversation, I may ask you other questions as well, which I might find relevant or interesting. There's going to be one definition I'm going to give you halfway through and then there will be subsequent questions based on that definition. And then I'll also be showing you a series of images after I've asked these questions to get your impressions and your sort of ideas around them.

Ahmad 00:40

Okay

Arjun Awasthi 00:40

Okay. All right, let's get started. So to begin, can you please tell me about yourself and your background

Ahmad 00:50

shall I state my name is well Okay, so I'm doing electrical engineering I just completed my fourth year I'm from Malaysia. Growing up my family is not that high, not a top tier family but then we go into that higher capital since my brother started working and my sister and me. Then I started have interest in luxury fashion not just because they are pricey and for this they also because they are high quality and stuff, public internet and mobile data. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 00:52

You don't have to Okay. So, what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Ahmad 01:32

Well, luxury is obviously going to have different definitions for everyone. So, for some, luxury might be, some might say to have branded clothing is luxury, some might say it is a normal, a designer is a luxury. So personally, for me, luxury is somewhere in between, but most important for me is the quality of the thing so the choice of going for luxury fashion, mainly for the quality, and then the added side benefit of having a status is additional bonus to it. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 02:07

Okay, so the added side benefit is the status thing that comes with it. So then what kind of fashion products or accessories do you buy?

Ahmad 02:16

Well, I do like clothes, but I don't usually buy a very I don't have a clothes that have a designer label on them. I prefer something very simple. And same goes to watches. So recently, I've become interested in watches I went to Switzerland and I just bought a watch there. And also perfume is part of it as well. Yeah. Not really much into shoes saw only have like a few very good shoes that could wear across multiple occasions instead of having different shoes for everything. That's in brief.

Arjun Awasthi 02:55

Well, you can be as detailed as you would like to be. So you talked about quality. So what is it about quality that really attracts you to these luxury fashion products.

Ahmad 03:07

Okay. There's an interesting example. So when I grew up, especially in my secondary school, I went to a boarding school so the requirement is to have a leather shoe. So obviously as a child trying to not burden my parents the idea is to go for something that is the cheapest option available. So actually there's one brand called bata and they have a shoe very basic leather shoe for like, it's not even leather, it's just like PVC or PU sort of shoe for like 50 or 60 ringitt very cheap. But the thing is after wearing the shoe for like, what two months it kind of falls apart then I started to realize that it is cheap, yes, but it's not a good investment. Then I started to look for something better option something good for like 200 ringitt but for like a brand called I was very different than everybody Yeah, what's a good shoe 200 ringgit after promotion at that time is quite expensive for me. But that's the entry for luxury, I could wear that same shoe for three years. So that 200 Maybe 300 ringgit compared to the 50 ringitt for months. So this started started mind just to go for luxury fashion, on top of that is a better shoe, better support for yourself, it looks good. So all the benefits and then it lasts longer. So at the end it's a better investment.

Arjun Awasthi 04:31

And you also mentioned the side benefit is status right. So how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products for you?

Ahmad 04:41

Okay. I will see status and brand representation as two different things. So personally, what is important for me is the first impression. So if I go for a job interview, I want to dress up properly, but in daily life as well, we want to dress up. Like, when you see someone you know that he's a good person, he's a nice person. We know when we walk through the streets, sometimes we see that one person, we don't know anything about a person, but then we see based on the fashion, so wearing a sweatshirt sweatpants, in the middle of the day walking through the street, no, we thought that, he may or may not be a little bit suspicious, right? So compared to one person wearing like a normal t shirt, appropriate to the weather. So we know that we are keen, like, we will accept that person more compared to the other person. So that is what I meant by the status. In terms of the brand representation, I personally am not really going for that. So I do have a few like polo shirts, but I prefer them to have the smallest logo possible. Yeah. So you know, they are like some people, even my friends, they have like Gucci, all shirts are like full of the Gucci logo, for me I don't like those things. I feel like people that tend to show the brand that they have is people that don't really can't really afford so for them that's an achievement.

So for me, I like something very subtle. I like a good brand. But I don't need to show off to people that this is a branded item. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 06:24

So, I'm more interested in understanding the reputation of the brand. So rather than the sort of as you're saying the sort of overt representation, but more so like the history of the brand, and what has made it to what it is today. So that sort of reputation. So does that matter?

Ahmad 06:44

Well, it does matter, but [inaudible] to some extent. Obviously now there are a lot of brands that are very affordable also have a good quality, they don't have a very long history thus making it more affordable compared to brands that have similar quality, similar material, but because they are selling the brand name. So at some extent, it might be good, but not necessarily. For example, here in the UK, Tommy Hilfiger is very common brand it's like it's a normal tommy shirt, right? But in Malaysia Tommy Hilfiger is a big deal one piece of the shoes is like 500 ringitt. For many people, it's quite expensive. So some people might want it to show that they have the brand. But for me personally, I don't like it to show that way. And there are some brands, even in Malaysia there are local brands called like Bonia, so Bonia is a local Malaysia brand, but they also have features like Braun Buffel is part of the Bonia group. So, Bonia has a very good quality cheaper than the rest, and especially because they are made for Asian, they are very good fit for me. So although they don't have long 100 years of history, but I quite like it because comfortable to wear and very reasonable pricing and they last long.

Arjun Awasthi 08:02

Would you consider then that something that's maybe expensive, is also something that's of good quality?

Ahmad 08:10

No.

Arjun Awasthi 08:11

Okay, yeah.

Ahmad 08:12

And one of very good reason for this is especially for Balenciaga. Balenciaga is a very good, apparently, they are good. They are ... documentary series, I watched recently about fashion brands. Yeah, during the Eurovision, Balenciaga [inaudible]. So they [inaudible] actually tell the lady from the US to try to brand Balenciaga. He said he didn't want his brand to be an experimental brand. But now what we see today, Balenciaga has been declared as an experimental brand they recently they launched a pouch that's basically a chips, if you saw before, yeah, it's really close. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:46

All right. And how important are following fashion trends for you? Do you follow them? If not, why?

Ahmad 08:57

I'm somewhat neutral to that. So I'm not too far back, like, if I'm not following the trend then perhaps some [inaudible] or something. So I'm quite recent, but then, like, recently, people started to wear like baggy jeans and something. I don't go and jump into the trend. Yeah. So basically, if the trend is something that I personally feel is like, reasonable for me, suitable for my style, could show good appearance of myself then I may dab in but otherwise I may not. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 09:30

And then how would you sort of describe your personal style then?

Ahmad 09:34

Well, I like a good tailored fit, not stick skinny fit that is, but not baggy jeans. Just a very nice gentleman look. Tailored fit, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 09:46

Brilliant. So if you had a chance to obtain a luxury item, such as maybe a belt, a wallet, shoes or handbag, whatever, that was made from exotic skins, so here exotic skins are specifically made from, you know, crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard, those kinds of leathers. Would you consider owning it? And maybe perhaps not necessarily buying it yourself? Maybe you were gifted it, but would you consider owning it?

Ahmad 10:16

Well, for some exotic skins will have a value. But for me personally either like it for some reason, like I don't like crocodiles scared of snakes, etc. So it's not something for me, but I will go for very good leather, like a calf leather. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:34

So what is it about those kinds of exotic skins that may not be appealing to you?

Ahmad 10:40

Well, for starters, they look very complex, I would prefer something very simple.

Arjun Awasthi 10:45

Okay,

Ahmad 10:46

Very slick. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:47

So it's more about the aesthetic?

Ahmad 10:49

Aesthetic plus the animal itself. Okay. Yeah. Like, I have a fear of snakes. So I'm not going to wear a snake around me. Right. Yeah. Although, there are also added stuff, like, in terms of the ethical stuff, [inaudible] of these animals shouldn't be worn, and all those kind of things.

Arjun Awasthi 11:09

Okay, I'm going to come back to that question about the animal ethics. So just imagine what do you would what do you consider then is appealing, if anything about these luxury products that are made from exotic skins?

Ahmad 11:29

Well, I've seen one of my friend here. So very, very quite distinct design, like, compared to a normal leather, they have a very nice, natural patterns. It's not a handmade pattern or something. So they might be appealing for some, but again for me it's not. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 11:47

No, that's all right. Yeah. Yes, I'm very interested. So have you ever felt conflicted about buying luxury fashion products? We've established that you have not or you don't buy exotic skins, but in general luxury fashion items? Do you feel a little conflicted about buying them?

Ahmad 12:11

Conflicted in terms of what?

Arjun Awasthi 12:13

Like, Do you have any feelings of, you know, should I buy this? Or should I not buy this? So those kinds of feelings when you're buying these kinds of products?

Ahmad 12:23

Okay, well, I do have a good experience on that. So recently, I wanted to buy the watch in Switzerland. As usual, I'm not going to just go and buy because I know the brand I'm gonna like do a little bit survey. So I went to a few shops compared this watch, and I tried to check different watches mean, but in a similar price range, so the options are like Seiko something else. So Seiko has like additional benefit, they say that they have these additional features and all. But then when I go back, I realized that this brand is slightly more luxury compared to that one. And there's a good reason for that. Because this one is made of high quality materials, scratch resistant, competitor was just plastic. So for me, I believe that more compared to additional features. And there's also another example in terms of automotive. So in Malaysia, they are Proton which is, local made car. So Proton usually try to establish new vision of car, there is a low price point, whereas a lot of features so sometimes you can't believe that they have all those features that are at that price point, it's just not possible compared to like Honda for example. For starters, say Honda at this price range, just as the base or whatever, it was [inaudible] and then this car, Proton, they could make the same features but at this price point, way less so obviously there's a catch. Honda I can last like nine years these got like three years and then they it can but kind of no use anymore. So usually that's one of the things that whatever we need to go for. Yeah, maybe slightly basic, but a more long lasting. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:06

Yeah. So I'm going to ask some questions about the illegal wildlife trade actually. So as I mentioned, exotic skins are used to make luxury fashion products. So how do you think that these skins are sourced?

Ahmad 14:22

Well the answer just came to my mind. I don't think there's any way legal to source them other than just go and hunt it. Yeah, because no one actually like like for example, for calf people actually have a barn and something but no one actually do the same for crocodile. So obviously, I believe it's going to be illegal in many cases. There might be cases where there are all full populations and they are allowed to do so. But I think it's mostly go aside from snakes perhaps because they do have like they shed their skin. I'm not exactly sure if that part of skin is used.

Arjun Awasthi 15:05

No.

Ahmad 15:06

Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 15:06

Yeah. Okay, interesting. And interestingly, actually, there is an association, the International Crocodilian Farmers Association. So there are breeding farms for crocodiles and alligators. But yes, no, that's just a side note. Yeah. So do you know anything about the wildlife trade? So if so, what do you know? So you sort of talked a little bit about illegality and legality, but what do you know about the wildlife trade?

Ahmad 15:24

Good to know. Or I can't comment much on that, I have very little knowledge about it. I just learned that there is a crocodile farm, okay. Not much comment on that. That's totally fine. Okay, so now I'm going to give you a definition. And then I'm going to ask you questions based on this definition. Alright? So there is this term in psychology, which is known as cognitive dissonance. And cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas, and behaviors, or behaviors, this discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So an example of that would be say, your value is that you really care about the environment, and you value sustainability. But your behavior is that you drive a car that is quite emission prone, and has very high emissions. So there is this cognitive dissonance between your value and your behavior. So how do you resolve that? So the way that you can resolve that is perhaps you go ahead and start recycling, because you think that you're still being in line with your values in that sense. And you're not going to cause that harm? Again, that sort of concept, right? So have you experienced this kind of cognitive dissonance when you have bought luxury fashion products? And if so, how do you sort of, you know, make yourself eliminate the discomfort and feel comfortable? Well, to be fair, I might not have that issue yet.

Arjun Awasthi 17:26

Okay.

Ahmad 17:29

I do know that some of my friends, for example, some are like very pro-vegan and all, but for me, that's not really something I personally believe or pause on. So not much of that as well.

Arjun Awasthi 17:44

No, that's fine. The thing that I'm trying to actually figure out and understand is, if you're buying a luxury product, do you feel any sense of guilt when you're buying it?

Ahmad 17:54

No.

Arjun Awasthi 17:55

No. So if you could explain why you don't feel that?

Ahmad 17:58

In fact, I do have a feeling of pleasure. [inaudible] I have something new something good. Perhaps because I don't have a reason to feel guilty.

Arjun Awasthi 18:10

Yeah.

Ahmad 18:12

After all, for me, I see it as a good investment. Yeah, especially like, per se, mid range luxury. Usually people buy it to use instead of buy it to sell. Like people buy a t-shirt to use it instead of buy Rolex for an investment. So I don't feel that I think it's a one of self reform, and also a good establishment of yourself. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:37

If you could talk a little bit more about the investment and value aspect of it. And sort of a good thing to aspire to or an ambition for yourself, as you said, I'm really interested in that.

Ahmad 18:49

Okay, well, in everything we buy, obviously, the way my engineering mind is gonna work it's gonna see how long am I going to use it? Am I going to use it every day? So sometimes it might be an expensive thing, but I'm not going to wear it like every day. So that is a good investment. For example, I have in fact this shoe, so it's quite expensive. It's like what 250 pounds. So for that same shoe I could buy something cheaper but this shoe I wear like every day through like two years through like different terrains, snow, desert sand hiking and all so for me that's a very good investment because after all, it still last till today. Compared if I buy the same shoe, but way cheaper, probably like last a few months, so that's not good. So probably in the same duration I will make five pairs of this cheaper shoe, which could add totaling to more expensive than this one shoe. So for me this is a good investment. Because obviously it's a better quality, better support for myself, better health for me and it looks good.

Arjun Awasthi 19:59

Yeah.

Ahmad 20:00

Compared to having like five, low quality, shitty shoes that you don't like it, you feel like every time you walk, you feel like it's gonna hurt your back. But then you keep it you thought it's gonna save your money. But afterwards it's gonna you're gonna spend more on it. Yeah, that's one thing about use. And the second one, where we buy a collector's item. So this is what we buy in the view of, we're going to sell it back in a few years. So usually, when we buy this stuff, we don't really use it day to day, we may use it occasionally, during like special occasion. So perhaps if I buy an expensive Rado, I may wear it like, a few months. Not always like, perhaps sometimes. And then after a few years, I got to see that if the values go price up, then it's a good time to sell it. And then it's good time to buy new things in the collection. So that's called like collector's hand, just swapping somehow and earn money from that.

Arjun Awasthi 20:59

Actually, that's a really interesting concept. Because even products that are made from exotic skins, for example, handbags, there is this sort of idea that they will gain value over time. So you will get a return on investment. Have you heard of that? Do you have any comments on that?

Ahmad 21:18

Well, I'm not personally looking for it exotic skins. Even for me, even if I'm buying something, to sell to the point of view for investment, I will always look for something that has good chances to get higher return. And something that I like because at the end of the day, if something happens, we cannot predict the future. Something happens and I see the price dip down. I cannot sell it. So at least I have something that I like instead of having something that I don't like.

Arjun Awasthi 21:47

Yeah, but it makes a lot of sense. So okay, so now you haven't bought a product made of exotic skin. But what if you were to be gifted a product like this? Or you inherit this product? Made from exotic skin specifically. So would you feel a need to justify owning it? And how would you justify it? So for example, if you've ever anyway, you just answer I'll give you the example later.

Ahmad 22:18

Well, if I got a gift of exotic skins product. I will appreciate my friend very much. Yeah. Not that, I'm probably not going to wear it everyday. I may wear it like once or twice just to appreciate a friend. But it's and added thing to the collection and perhaps after a few months, I may look into selling it for a second stuff. Because it's not something I go by. Yeah,

Arjun Awasthi 22:46

yeah. No, that's a interesting actually. So you would appreciate your friend for giving you the product. So I guess how would you express that appreciation? Yeah.

Ahmad 23:00

Usually, if a friend, they're gonna spend a lot of money into you, they are going to be somewhat close friend, or close business partner. So if they are a good friend to you, chances are they're not going to

buy to you because they don't know they know that you don't like it. But if they just give it to you just like appreciating you this is a very thoughtful gift. I may wear it although I'm not personally like the design. And then if like we are very close I just tell the person that I do actually prefer different kinds of styles and thing. So in the future he would include that in his consideration. In terms of guilt of having it again I don't think I am going to have that guilt because I've seen a lot of people do something worse. Like I saw a lot of people [inaudible] with this America, Australia they would even like eat crocodile for like soup and something, something that no one would thought like, even vegan counting like people could allocate that. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 24:06

Oh, that's interesting. So it's sort of like because you're not doing that behavior. And that you're going to intend to let go of this exotic product anywhere in the future. So there are people who are doing much worse things than just receiving a gift.

Ahmad 24:23

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 24:23

Okay. That makes sense. So do you ever face and I know you've said you don't feel guilty, but have you faced any ethical concerns ethical dilemmas when buying luxury fashion products?

Ahmad 24:38

Well, if it means like usually, I don't have any ethical [concern] when buying luxury fashion. And the reason because comparing for example, a luxury brand and a temu you know that temu has a lot of controversial child slavery and all so if I'm purchasing from temu I may have this ethical concern like, am I supporting these kinds of bad behavior, the misconduct, but usually this beneficent, although some of them are made in a low income country, but usually they are well regulated. So unless I heard something bad about it, there's really no reason for me to have an ethical concern about it.

Arjun Awasthi 25:23

Yeah. So you trust the brand?

Ahmad 25:25

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 25:26

To make sure that the ethical concerns are taken care of.

Ahmad 25:29

Yeah, that's part of the brand. [inaudible] my belief. Yeah. Okay, great. So do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why am I not? Concerns that sort of exotic skins? Well, it's a bit far fetched for me, but for some it might be. Yeah, I know that some people actually love exotic animals. So for them, they won't like it. It's just how, how, for example, a vegan would not like to see a good being used for food might be the same thing for these kind of

people. People that don't like it to be seen that those exotic animals be used for fashion? Because after all, if the fashion just goes over produce mass per share, then we're going to have a lot of under population issues and stuff. Yeah. Yeah, for the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 26:30

And do your personal feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Ahmad 26:38

No.

Arjun Awasthi 26:39

Okay.

Ahmad 26:39

Yeah. And if I'm going to go for wallet, or belt or a shoe, I'll go for really good leather skin calf skin, especially one of my favorite. I would not, I don't really have a like feeling or something about it. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 27:01

So is there then a distinction in your mind between using calf skin versus using exotic skin?

Ahmad 27:15

Well, I think to be frank, it's not really about the animal to me. It's about how the final product looks like. And as an exotic animal, usually, they wanted to preserve design, the initial the original design of the skin, which is something not to my liking. Yeah. But for the calf or something they are actually very small, which is something I like. So for example, if I see a belt, I didn't know that it's actually made from exotic skin. And it just looks very soft. Firstly, simple. I may have purchased it. Yeah, without knowing is made up of exotic skin. So it is not really about the animal. It's about the after design, after production. All right, that's fine. And I guess you weren't also mentioned about sort of, earlier, you were talking a little about killing of animals and sort of the ethical issues around that. So what do you think about that sort of thing? Because it is that some people consider some animals for food, some animals are for leather, and some animals are, you know, not to be disturbed? How do you sort of feel about those kinds of thoughts? Personally, for me, I don't really have those kinds of segregations. The only thing I have is something based on my belief. So I'm a Muslim. I would not go with anything related to pig skin or dog skin. Other than that it should be alright. Okay, so basically, it's based on my belief. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 28:59

That's a great answer. So, finally on this, if you have pets, Do you have pets?

Ahmad 29:06

No, no.

Arjun Awasthi 29:08

But do you think having pets or pet companion influences people's purchasing decisions?

Ahmad 29:15

I do like cats. I don't have one, but even looking at my friends and family that don't have pets, I don't think it matters. Like my friends they have a sugar glider. It's not like I'm gonna buy a belt made out of a sugar glider. So I I don't think there's a direct relationship between that based on what I see. But for people, they may observe different things. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 29:44

That's very interesting, because I'm very curious about exotic pets also, so you mentioned a sugar glider that's quite interesting. But yeah, I guess any final thoughts, anything that you would like to share? on anything you'd like to add about your attitudes towards your experiences with luxury fashion products.

Ahmad 30:07

I think luxury is not just about the brand it is about the whole experience. From day one, you buy the things and it boosts your confidence. So although it may not directly increase your status or especially for [inaudible] like something that is very overt, but increase your confidence in your day to day, and in that actually could influence your day to day behavior with people, how you interact, how you make good the job interview, and perhaps because of that boosts self confidence, you may get a job, how you would influence your if going for marketing, how you influence your customer, they all are correlated. Like a very simple example, if you go meeting someone, and the person actually wears a very nice perfume. So you have a high tendency to know that this is a good person, he takes care of himself very well, compared to a person I come sweaty, very like in a bad shape of clothing, you might think that that person may not be well respected, might not be a good fit for the job, although you don't really know yet whether who will be better at the job. So it matters like how you let other people judge you in your first impression. That matters a lot. For me.

Arjun Awasthi 31:34

Fascinating. All right, I think I'm good on the questions here. So I want to actually show you some images, all fashion products that are made from exotic skins to get your impression on what you think about them, so they're all labeled image image B and C, D, and E. So you can have a look at them. And just what are the first initial thoughts that come to you. So when you talk about them, just talk about them as image A, image B, image C, so and so forth. And if you have any questions about the images aske me.

Ahmad 32:17

Well, my first thought they look, the first thought is just I don't like the rough design in all the images I've mentioned before it's about the aesthetics. But that doesn't mean that they are not good quality. It's just that for this image C I don't think there is any reason to have that as exotic skin there. I think there's a lot more better alternative compared to this one. Yeah. Other than that I don't think I do have much of a first impression.

Arjun Awasthi 33:02

And I guess what about these images of products? So you said it's a rough texture? Or it's not appealing to you? But what do you think could be appealing about these?

Ahmad 33:19

Well, actually image E and image A, assuming even if the rough skin, they're actually a very nice product. For one because they don't have any brand label there. And also, they look very simple and classy. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 33:39

And what about the other images such as the watch strap or the handbag here?

Ahmad 33:44

Well image D, although it has the same DNA of having slick design, they're just like an unnecessary padlock. Which makes it less or less appealing for me. And image C. I know a thing or two about camera, not much, but I don't think this is a good investment in any way. This is just for status and I don't think this is necessary. It's not functionally needed for it to last longer than anything else. And for this one, it's just a normal watch. But the strap is not appealing at all. Yeah. Anything like specific you want me to add on it?

Arjun Awasthi 34:34

No. Just curious to know like, I just think Why do you think then people will buy these products if, by your own admission, you know, you personally would not buy something like this because it doesn't look attractive to you. But why do you think it might look attractive to other people?

Ahmad 34:54

Well, I think in terms of luxury fashion, sometimes it's not about how the product is designed. For some people, it's about how much it is. So I do know a few people, they just go and then they just take the most expensive stuff doesn't matter if it's the best thing. It's just that the highest price tag and then they're just going to post this, it's the most expensive and they could buy it. I don't think that it's a good investment or a good consumer attitude. So, those kind of people might be interested in this. Like, for example, this one, they may have exactly the same model, but without this exotic skin, see? Yes. So for people who look for functional, that will be they will go out for the highest functional of this camera image C, without the skin, because there's no added benefit of it. Yeah. But for some people, they might say that the skin is going to add two grand more. So it's something they want, because they could show off they have the most expensive thing other than that some people really have interest in this kind of exotic texture. So for them, this is going to be very appealing, I believe. Yeah. Especially for this one because it's like marbled look I know a friend that would like this kind of texture with this gold and buckle on image E. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 36:24

So it's that they're basically buying these more expensive things, because then they can show it off and boast about it. Yeah, pretty much. Any other final thoughts?

Ahmad 36:34

You know, I don't know why by image B. The watch actually doesn't look like an expensive watch. It's just looks like a normal watch with an exotic skin. That's all.

Arjun Awasthi 36:50

All right. Well, thank you very much. That was very informative.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Kasun

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

All right. So thank you so much for coming and participating in this interview. Basically, I'm just going to ask you a series of questions. It's just a semi structured interview, which means that I have a list of questions but based on our conversation, I can ask you some organic questions that may come up. In the middle of asking the questions, I will give you a definition of a term and then there'll be some questions that are based off of that and then finally, to wrap up and show you a series of a few images to get your impression and ideas on them. Alright, great. So do you have any questions for me before we begin? Okay, that's fine. So, to begin, could you just tell me about yourself and your background?

Kasun 00:44

Okay so my name is [pseudonym] I'm an international student from Sri Lanka, who's currently studying electronics engineering with computer systems. It's a master's actually. Yeah. So as an international student, I just crossed the world actually, to be here. Yeah, summer holidays so found a part time job just keep the expenses like to manage all the expenses. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:12

Okay, that's fine. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Kasun 01:19

Well, yeah, at times. Well, I think a lot of it has to do with hype. So to say, like, society would say, this is cool and then as a result, prices would go up for that certain product, but I wouldn't necessarily say that luxury items have a higher quality, so to speak. Obviously, luxury items do have a higher, higher, how do you say, higher quality, but sometimes sometimes because of the type the prices might go up and some would say that's luxury because of the increase in price. unnecessarily.

Arjun Awasthi 02:00

Interesting. So you are a consumer though?

Kasun 02:02

Yes, yeah, obviously.

Arjun Awasthi 02:04

Yes, you are a consumer of luxury fashion. So what kind of fashion products or accessories do you buy?

Kasun 02:09

Well, shoes like Nike, for us design international fashion, so to speak, cargos are quite expensive and brands such as Hollister that kind of stuff. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 02:21

And what is it about these products that sort of is attractive to you?

Kasun 02:31

Well, if you'd asked me upfront, I would say the quality but if I were to ask myself, surely it probably be because of like society and following the herd, kind of cuz everyone buys Hollister so why not you know?

Arjun Awasthi 02:48

Yeah, and you mentioned about the hype. So I do want to ask, do you consider yourself somebody who follows fashion trends?

Kasun 02:56

Not really? Not really, but sometimes if you want to look fashionable, I feel like you do have to follow certain trends, but I don't follow them so to speak, but if I do want to appear as fashionable I would maybe buy a few items.

Arjun Awasthi 03:13

Okay, and how do you feel about fashion products that are made from exotic skins? So this would be your crocodile alligator? Yeah, sure.

Kasun 03:24

How are you not boiling. It's so hot in here.

Arjun Awasthi 03:32

No, but these exotic skins would then be items that are made from crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard skin and they can be you know, where your watch straps to wallets to belts to your shoes, etc. So, how do you feel about that?

Kasun 03:47

Well, at the end of the day an animal is gonna get killed for us to enjoy these exotic skins. I don't think it's necessarily right because if you would take a normal leather, well, leather is still an animal but if you were to compare it to like a python skin wallet it would still be the same functionality? So I don't understand why it would have to kill python to get python skin. I'm not saying that killing a cow is okay to make a leather skin wallet but still if you compare the two there's not much difference in functionality. So I wouldn't really indulge in exotic skins, so to speak.

Arjun Awasthi 04:23

But have you bought things that are made from sort of cow leather?

Kasun 04:27

Yeah, so like Yeah, yeah, definitely. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 04:31

Okay, but have you ever been interested in sort of, or have you ever come across products that are made from exotic skins?

Kasun 04:39

Yeah, so like I said, python, I have come across like python leather wallets. Crocodile sometimes? Yeah, just python and crocodile.

Arjun Awasthi 04:50

And what have your impression then when you have encountered these products?

Kasun 04:53

Well, I'll just look at it and be like, okay, that's cool for like the first few seconds but if you think in retrospect, it's not it's just a belt or a wallet, it's just gonna serve the same functionality as a leather belt or a wallet. It's just more expensive because it's exotic.

Arjun Awasthi 05:08

So then for you personally, it's not appealing?

Kasun 05:11

Yeah, it's not that appealing.

Arjun Awasthi 05:12

Okay, but then obviously, people do buy these products. Yeah. So then what do you consider would be appealing about them?

Kasun 05:20

I think the exclusive, exclusivity? I think that's the word. Yeah, because obviously, these exotic skins are gonna be more expensive that means it's not affordable for a lot of people. So, if people want to feel that they're exclusive, then probably go for a higher price tag so you get an exotic skin.

Arjun Awasthi 05:41

And so how do you, so, how do you connect basically exclusivity to luxury fashion in general?

Kasun 05:47

Well, luxury fashion items, really, they're going to be way more expensive than the average price so if people wanted to feel because they've earned such amount of money, they if they want to feel exclusive, so to speak, I think they would purchase those items to separate them from the rest. Yeah, because if a rich person, so to speak, had a python wallet and the average consumer just had a leather wallet the rich person could pull it out, it would be okay I'm so much more special than you are, when in retrospect, they're not special, they just have the money to afford that luxury item.

Arjun Awasthi 06:28

So then I guess this is sort of a question related to this feeling of being special.

Kasun 06:35

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 06:36

So then how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products?

Kasun 06:44

I think it affects it heavily if you were to compare so have you heard of the brand Supreme?

Arjun Awasthi 06:53

Yes.

Kasun 06:54

Yes, so if you were to compare a supreme t-shirt, just a plain white t shirt, and compare that to a plain white t-shirt, let's say Primark, I'm not putting Primark down, but the price difference is quite significant but the quality is relatively the same and I've seen this firsthand, you gonna pay way more for Supreme because it is Supreme the brand, the hype, so you're gonna pay more for the brand, essentially. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 07:23

And then I guess then what about the status symbol? Because you were talking about how somebody who would buy these products would want to come across as looking as like their special?

Kasun 07:33

Yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 07:34

Do you have any reflections on that, like the status?

Kasun 07:37

Yeah obviously, if you purchase these luxury items, they're going to be more expensive. So, I think with the purchasing of these items, I think there comes the status, which in retrospect isn't really right but it is what society has been built on these days. So if you do own these items, like a Gucci bag, or a Louis Vuitton bag, you're going to be looked at as Oh, she's rich, or he's rich and maybe, have you heard of the halo effect?

Arjun Awasthi 08:02

Yes.

Kasun 08:03

Yes, the halo effect. So it's gonna be like, Oh, since they're rich, maybe they're smarter, more capable and stuff like that.

Arjun Awasthi 08:09

Okay. So you've said that you don't buy these exotic skin products?

Kasun 08:18

Don't indulge in them, but I do have a few.

Arjun Awasthi 08:21

You do have a few. Okay, so could you talk to me about that?

Kasun 08:23

Yes, well, it's just been passed down, so, I think my dad has a python wallet so I came to it, and when that's when it came to me, because my dad does own one of these, but I don't necessarily know why he bought it? So, I think it's gonna get passed down to me. Yeah

Arjun Awasthi 08:42

No, that's fascinating. So have you felt conflicted about it? Like, ethically speaking? The Python wallet?

Kasun 08:50

Yeah, obviously, a python had to die for it and you should look at my wallet now It's just like unbreakable. There's no need for me to inherit a python wallet so to speak. I don't need it. So obviously, yeah, yeah, the ethics are questioned behind that wallet.

Arjun Awasthi 09:06

But I mean, again, so you will probably inherit this.

Kasun 09:11

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 09:11

So then what sort of feelings would you associate?

Kasun 09:14

I probably wouldn't use it.

Arjun Awasthi 09:16

You wouldn't use it?

Kasun 09:16

Because I know that animal had to die for me to enjoy this one, which I'm already enjoying because it's another wallet.

Arjun Awasthi 09:23

Okay. Yeah. So, for the I have a few questions related to the wildlife trade, actually. Yes. So how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products like the python wallet are sourced?

Kasun 09:41

What do you mean?

Arjun Awasthi 09:42

Like how is the raw materials sourced?

Kasun 09:44

Well, so they've got to be found.

Arjun Awasthi 09:47

Okay.

Kasun 09:47

And then they've got to be given a certain diet to make the skin in good condition. I think what you eat like as an animal what you eat goodlike depicts your the quality of the skin. So let's assume we had to find them, and eventually kill them, and then take skin off of them to make these exotic materials.

Arjun Awasthi 10:10

Yeah. This isn't a quiz or anything I just said.

Kasun 10:13

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:15

What people do you know?

Kasun 10:16

I'm assuming that's what happened.

Arjun Awasthi 10:17

Yeah, fair enough.

Kasun 10:20

Is it what happens?

Arjun Awasthi 10:21

I'll tell you later. So do you know anything about the wildlife trade? And if so what do you know?

Kasun 10:29

Don't know much. But that's what I told you as well. Yeah, thank you. Well,

Arjun Awasthi 10:35

you know, it is interesting, because you're right, there are some breeding farms from which the skins come from. But also, a lot of times, animals are hunted and poached. And that's the way that skins also come into the market.

Kasun 10:49

And like the black market?

Arjun Awasthi 10:50

So yeah, so it's like it there is legitimate. There is a legitimate farming industry as well. But then there's a lot of gray areas and the black market as well. So it's quite a mixed picture. All right, so I'm going to read out a definition. This is a psychological term, which is known as cognitive dissonance. So you already told me about the halo effect, I'm sure you probably know about cognitive dissonance, but I'll go ahead and read the definition. So, cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So essentially, what it's trying to say is that say you really care about the environment so your value is that you care about the environment but your behavior is that you drive a car that is a petrol guzzler, right? So then you have a cognitive dissonance state. So what are you going to do to resolve that? So maybe, you know, one day you're not going to drive your car and just for that day, you're going to recycle, yeah, so then you're sort of resolving your cognitive dissonance? Yeah. All right. If that makes sense? So have you experienced this kind of discomfort when you have bought luxury fashion products? And if so, how did you eliminate the discomfort?

Kasun 12:16

Well, when you go around these so called luxury markets, you tend to run into like python belts things like premium cow leather belts. You look at it, and for a second, you're like, wow, that's cool. But like I said, before, that feeling of awe for me, at least, it fades within a few seconds and then you realize, oh, animals been killed for me to enjoy belt, which does, which has the same functionality as you buy as the belt that you buy on H&M, Primark, so well I wouldn't buy it.

Arjun Awasthi 12:50

But then now, this is interesting, because you will eventually come in possession of this Python Wallet. So then how are you going to sort of resolve that?

Kasun 13:00

Well, the animals already been killed for me to have this wallet. For me to stop feeling bad about it, just not use it. Like I said, the wallet that I showed you, it's just a plastic wallet.

Arjun Awasthi 13:15

But then you will have it and as you said, the animal is already dead?

Kasun 13:19

Yeah I can't bring it back to life from the wallet so I just leave it lying around, I guess. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 13:26

Okay. So would you feel the need to justify this inheritance to others? If you are questioned about it?

Kasun 13:36

Well, yeah, if an animal activist, so to speak, saw my python wallet I'd be like, I don't support it, but was just given to me. It was my father's decision. So it's just laying around, I don't support it, I don't use it. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 13:49

It doesn't necessarily have to be an animal activist, anybody.

Kasun 13:53

Anyway, yes. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 13:57

Right, and have you faced any ethical concerns when buying? I know, I asked this question before, but I'm more curious to understand if there was any moral dilemma that you faced, and then you overcame that.

Kasun 14:14

I feel like I kind of answered it before, like, understanding the difference between like the initial awe that it's a python, green color, the skin, the initial awe fades and after that, I think your ethical side starts to kick in and that's when you're realizing animals gotten killed for this, essentially, but there's no real difference between a normal belt that you could get anywhere and this cow leather belt and why would you support an industry which kills this animal for just for a belt. right?

Arjun Awasthi 14:46

Now that's very interesting, because obviously, we also kill animals for food.

Kasun 14:52

Yes, we do. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:54

And so I just want I'm curious to understand so how do you reconcile with that and then do you think there's any difference between the two?

Kasun 15:03

Well, I think when you're eating foods, you need it for sustenance so the stakes are much higher. Whereas if it's like a belt or a wallet, it's just an accessory. You don't need it but food you do need. I know there's other like sources of protein such as plant based, and stuff like that. But I think I think I'm more able to convince myself that it's okay, when it's eating food, such as meat from animals, because the stakes are higher like I said, I need it for sustenance.

Arjun Awasthi 15:41

But essentially, do you think there is any difference in the kind of animals that we are using for consumption because at the end of the day, both the food and the wallet are two products that are being used for human consumption. So do you think that there's any distinction between ...

Kasun 16:00

The animals used?

Arjun Awasthi 16:01

Yeah.

Kasun 16:03

Well, yeah, you get people who eat, who eat all kinds of stuff like python, which can be used as leather so, I think it goes both ways. I don't think there's any real distinction because you can use. Well, you can use the animal for both food and a product.

Arjun Awasthi 16:20

Right. So I, so just a general question, do you believe, and you sort of touched upon this, but specifically the use of exotic skins in luxury fashion?

Kasun 16:34

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 16:34

Do you think that's an ethical issue?

Kasun 16:36

I think so. I don't think you need an exotic skin to portray a luxury brand. So to speak, yeah, I think it's unethical.

Arjun Awasthi 16:47

And do you, so your feelings towards animals? Have they ever interfered in your purchasing behavior or purchasing intention?

Kasun 16:57

Well, no, because it's always been a thought to me that is unethical. So it's never altered what I'm gonna purchase because I'm never gonna buy something like that.

Arjun Awasthi 17:06

Yeah, but just in general, I guess, because it doesn't even necessarily have to be an exotic skin because a company like, let's say, Louis Vuitton, is going to have products that are obviously not made from animal skin but then they're also going to have products that are made from animal skin, and are going to have products that are made from exotic skin as well. So in a sense, what I'm trying to ask is, when you go to a store like that, even if you don't buy an animal skin product, are you thinking of an animal when you are making those purchases?

Kasun 17:41

This might make me sound horrible. No, just be honest. Yeah, no, I do not really think about the animal when I'm [inaudible].

Arjun Awasthi 17:48

That's totally fine. Yeah. And do you have pets?

Kasun 17:51

Yes, I do.

Arjun Awasthi 17:52

Alright, so could you tell me a bit about your pet? What kind of pet?

Kasun 17:57

Well I used to have twelve dogs, but it's been reduced to like, five? Yeah, so they're all like, they're all like very big dogs like Dobermans, German Shepherds, and Great Dane, I think? Yeah. So they're very, they're very, like their guard dogs you see, but they're very friendly towards the family. I love them. Nothing I have nothing bad to say about them.

Arjun Awasthi 18:20

No, not at all. The thing is that I'm curious to know if having a pet companion also plays a part in your purchasing behavior?

Kasun 18:28

Yeah, I think so. Like I said, when you look at like a wallet or, or belt, whatever, you when you think about the animal that's been killed, If you, if it's in front of you, obviously, you're gonna think about, like every animal that you've interacted with and them dying, essentially.

Arjun Awasthi 18:46

So interesting. All right. Well, I think I have what I need from the questions. But is there anything else that you'd like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion?

Kasun 19:02

Not really. As long as it's not an exotic skin I think it's fine because I don't think it's necessary.

Arjun Awasthi 19:13

Yeah. It is interesting, though, because the demand for luxury products that are made from exotic skins seems to be increasing.

Kasun 19:22

Yes. Yeah, I think so too. Yeah, I think it's, again, to do with the exclusivity of the so called luxury, exotic skin, because obviously it's going to be, it's going to be more expensive. So the rich are

gonna get, are gonna get, gonna buy that and feel as though they're more exclusive [inaudible]. Yeah, exactly.

Arjun Awasthi 19:44

All right. Do you have any other final thoughts before we move on to the images? Alright, so this is these are five images and they're all products that incorporate or are made of exotic skins. So, I want you to have a look at them and tell me what your first impressions are what you think about them? What comes to mind? And if when talking about them, you can use the labels. So image A, image B, etc.

Kasun 20:17

For image C how is, so they're using exotic skin?

Arjun Awasthi 20:20

Yeah. Lizard skin.

Kasun 20:22

Ok, I'm assuming the lizard skin is being used for the leather grips. Yeah?

Arjun Awasthi 20:28

Yeah.

Kasun 20:28

So you want my opinion on it?

Arjun Awasthi 20:30

Yeah. What do you think when you look at these images? What are your first impressions?

Kasun 20:34

Well, I'll take, can I talk about, do I have talk about them in order?

Arjun Awasthi 20:37

No, no, whatever, which one, whichever ones you want to talk about.

Kasun 20:40

Well I'll talk about the camera because the primary function of the camera is to take pictures, you do not need leather, lizard leather skin. It could be anything, really. So I don't think the lizard leather skin was really necessary in this sense but again, I think it was included because Olympus is quite a high-end brand. I think again, it was included to increase the price and again, increase exclusivity. Yeah. Yes. Is it lizard?

Arjun Awasthi 21:25

Alligator.

Kasun 21:25

Okay. Yeah. Again, it is a watch and I know there's high demand for watches and there's reselling of watches, which is on the rise currently. But I think obviously, I think they include the because they included the alligator skin leather straps, it's going to increase its value. Yeah, I think it helps increase the value of the watch. But I don't think it's inherently correct a correct thing to do. But yeah, if I think it just increases the price of the watch, again, because it's exotic, that's image B.

Arjun Awasthi 22:06

And I'm also curious to know what you think, in general about these images about what could it be about them that makes them appealing or attractive to consumers?

Kasun 22:17

Was that because it's a little bit and I know that this is a high end brand so I think what the consumer is expecting high image qualities from this camera so that's what they expecting what they're getting leather lizard skin as well. I think that's what I'm not sure what the brand of this watch is? But I'm assuming I'm assuming it's high end. So, I think the addition of the alligator leather straps is that it adds value to it. And it adds aspect of awe because if it's already a good brand, and it makes great watches if you add that alligator skin, it's an additional pro. Yeah, belt. I left the cords for last because there's not really much you can say about it other than the fact that their value is probably so high because of the material used because there's no other other speciality to them, other than the fact that they're made up of certain certain exotic skin. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 23:31

Yeah and is the animal obvious in this case?

Kasun 23:35

Well, I think this is alligator isn't it?

Arjun Awasthi 23:37

That's crocodile.

Kasun 23:38

Okay. Crocodile? Yeah. This is quite obvious. Yes. I wouldn't have guessed it for those two. But this one? Yes, alligator or crocodile is this python?

Arjun Awasthi 23:46

That's also crocodile. All three are.

Kasun 23:48

So I wouldn't have guessed it for these two. But this one it was either crocodile alligator? Yes. Yeah, I could tell for that one. And maybe that comes into a playing factor when you're when you're purchasing when a person does purchase one of these items because if you could tell if something is an alligator, and you have it with you, other people will look at you and be like, Oh, wow, that's alligator skin. Wow,

that's python skin, and other people will be in awe around you. So, I think that that's the fact of why they're buying it. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 24:25

Any other thoughts?

Kasun 24:33

Again, all of these just couldn't be normal materials. They wouldn't have had to be exotic I think I think I'm saying it for when I say that it doesn't really need to be an exotic skin.

Arjun Awasthi 24:47

I forgot to ask you one question. Actually. I was curious to know what your relationship is like, to luxury fashion and how do you sort of describe your own personal sense of style. Yeah. Well, luxury fashion as a whole or as exotic. No, whatever your impression is.

Kasun 25:05

As a whole, like I said, I think I think when you talk about a luxury item, there's two aspects that come into play. There's quality and hype, so to speak, some luxury brands get into that luxury sector because of said hype, I'm talking about brands like Supreme and recently, I think Louis Vuitton and Gucci as well I'm not too sure but supreme, definitely because the quality doesn't back it up. But then there's also the quality side of things because let's some luxury brands do in fact, have much better quality when compared to other brands so I think those two factors play a big role in in which companies are luxury or which companies aren't. My opinions well, so to speak, are that I usually follow the hype but I don't really think about the quality because yeah, as a teenager, in retrospect.

Arjun Awasthi 26:11

All right. Do you have any other final thoughts and impressions?

Kasun 26:19

Not really.

Arjun Awasthi 26:19

All right, great. Well, then, thank you so much. It was quite

PART 2

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

You can just say that again.

Kasun 00:02

Yeah so when a consumer is buying an item, for the very first time, whatever time they're buying it, they're not necessarily gonna think about the animal that was slaughtered, put that item in front of them, they're also going to be thinking about the purchasing of the item, the awe behind it the price tag maybe, and how they're going to look in it, how they're going to feel about it. And all these emotions, I

think they clouds the fact that an animal has to be killed for that item to be put in front of them. And I don't think even me, I'm talking so high and mighty but I'm the same because I wouldn't think about it either. Because I think if I was buying an item such as a skin, or I mean a wallet or a bag or a watch or a camera, I wouldn't be thinking about what the background events. So I think that's a big factor. Yeah, unless someone brought it to my attention immediately I wouldn't be thinking about it.

Arjun Awasthi 01:03

And then after you bought it, you already bought it

Kasun 01:05

Yes, exactly. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:07

So it's not like you are actively thinking about it then either.

Kasun 01:10

Yes, exactly. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:14

That was really useful.

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

You can just say that again.

Participant 6 00:02

Yeah so when a consumer is buying an item, for the very first time, whatever time they're buying it, they're not necessarily gonna think about the animal that was slaughtered, put that item in front of them, they're also going to be thinking about the purchasing of the item, the awe behind it the price tag maybe, and how they're going to look in it, how they're going to feel about it. And all these emotions, I think they clouds the fact that an animal has to be killed for that item to be put in front of them. And I don't think even me, I'm talking so high and mighty but I'm the same because I wouldn't think about it either. Because I think if I was buying an item such as a skin, or I mean a wallet or a bag or a watch or a camera, I wouldn't be thinking about what the background events. So I think that's a big factor. Yeah, unless someone brought it to my attention immediately I wouldn't be thinking about it.

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Yes, exactly. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:07

So it's not like you are actively thinking about it then either.

Participant 6 01:10

Yes, exactly. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:14

That was really useful.

SPEAKERS

Wang Xia, Arjun Awasthi

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

All right. So thank you so much for joining me for this interview, I'll just give you a brief of what we're going to do. So it's just going to be semi-structured sort of format. So, I'll ask you a few questions and based on our conversation, I can ask other questions as well that may not be in here. In the middle of me asking these questions, I will give you a definition of a term and then there will be questions based on that. And then finally, I'll show you a series of images and I'd like to get your impression on them. Okay, thank you very much. So to begin Can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Wang Xia 00:39

I'm [pseudonym], and I'm a third year of the PhD student and doing finance area. I come from China and I have my masters in UK and also a PhD in UK.

Arjun Awasthi 00:52

Okay. Great, fantastic. So, what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Wang Xia 01:00

Kind of because I will buy some luxury products when I have extra money or extra salary. Yeah, because I used to work at a company so I think I will use half of my salary to buy the luxury products but if I earn less I will not consider to buying that.

Arjun Awasthi 01:22

So would you consider then that if you are buying luxury products, it's sort of you're treating yourself or?

Wang Xia 01:29

Yeah, kind of treated because I'm not just focused on some brands, because I just focus on the product if the design and also the color or it's a version it's a new version of that I will buy that but I will not just I want to buy this product. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:48

And what kind of products then do you buy?

Wang Xia 01:51

I always buy jewelries and clothing, bag.

Arjun Awasthi 01:58

Okay, and what about these items do you find interesting or appealing? What are you drawn to? What do you find about these products like the jewelry the bag, etc that you'd mentioned appealing for you?

Wang Xia 02:14

I like the design of them because you know there are a lot of just like fake products in China that will fake the design of the luxury product but I think the design of these luxury products cannot be repeat. So I really liked the design so I will buy them.

Arjun Awasthi 02:35

So the novelty of the design?

Wang Xia 02:37

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 02:39

And how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products for you?

Wang Xia 02:45

I think it's not very important because I think a lot of luxury brand they will have scandal but I think it will not to influence my purchase decision because I think it's the corporation decision I cannot change that.

Arjun Awasthi 03:06

So what? You mentioned scandal so what kind of scandal do you mean?

Wang Xia 03:11

Just like just for example the discriminate discrimination of the Dolce Gabbana or they will just like discriminate of the Asian people but sometimes I will still buy the product because some of the perfumes or the clothes are unique so cannot be replaced by other product.

Arjun Awasthi 03:33

Right. And would you consider yourself somebody who follows fashion trends?

Wang Xia 03:40

I'm not really follow the fashion trends because I like to buy the product I think is fashion but not follow the fashion and also I think if you live in UK you can find a lot of girls who they will have different styles there is not exclusive fashion for the girls in UK.

Arjun Awasthi 03:59

And what then kind of is fashion for you what is fashionable for you?

Wang Xia 04:04

I think the fashion for me is suited for me suitable for me. Okay, not just I will catch the fashion they must be suitable for me..

Arjun Awasthi 04:13

Okay, so it suits you?

Wang Xia 04:14

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 04:14

Okay. So then it's based basically on how you feel?

Wang Xia 04:19

Yeah, just like for example, do you know Alexander Wang?

Arjun Awasthi 04:24

Yes.

Wang Xia 04:24

Yeah, the product. They are really good. But they are just for the people who are really high and tall but not suit for me.

Arjun Awasthi 04:31

So if you had a chance to obtain a luxury item such as a handbag, but it was made from exotic skin so that means made from crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard so not necessarily buying it yourself maybe even having been gifted it would you consider owning a product like this?

Wang Xia 04:54

I think if I want to buy that maybe I will not to buy that. If it is as a gift, I will keep that. Because it's really hard for me to refuse people.

Arjun Awasthi 05:09

So what do you consider appealing? If anything about a luxury fashion product that's made from exotic skins?

Wang Xia 05:16

I think sometimes because some animals, they are raised by human not to the wild animals, I think they have already raised it as the product so it's normal things but if the animal they are wild animal and should be protected, I think I will not use that kind of product.

Arjun Awasthi 05:39

But what do you think about these products? Is it sort of makes them makes people want them?

Wang Xia 05:47

I think it's depends some people they are really cautious about to protect the animals, but some people they don't. So it's depend on the attitude of the customer. But I think for the company they think oh it's a luxury, so luxury of the and skin of the animals, so they will still sell that.

Arjun Awasthi 06:05

And what about this skin? Say if you see a crocodile alligator, or snake or lizard skin product, what do you think about it makes it attractive?

Wang Xia 06:15

I think is because of the skin of the snake and crocodile, it's really hard to obtain. So some people that they will think, Oh, it's a special so it's a kind of the special of their position in the society.

Arjun Awasthi 06:32

Could you talk a little bit more about that about the position in society?

Wang Xia 06:36

Because just like if some people they will think if I buy luxury, although I don't have so much money, if I have a luxury bag some other people will think oh, I'm rich I'm at a high position. So just like the luxury they are making snakes skins or crocodile skins, because really hard to obtain. So the people will think, Oh, it will be very expensive. So in normal society, if you take something really expensive, they will think oh, you are have a good job, or you have a high position in society.

Arjun Awasthi 07:12

Yeah. So I wanted to ask you also, have you ever been gifted a product that's been made of exotic skin?

Wang Xia 07:21

No.

Arjun Awasthi 07:22

Have you ever bought one?

Wang Xia 07:23

I think no because I think the skin of that just from the Hermes, but not all the brand. So I used to buy some Louis Vuitton or other luxury, but not Hermes. It's too expensive.

Arjun Awasthi 07:47

But I guess if you had the money to buy it?

Wang Xia 07:50

Yeah,.

Arjun Awasthi 07:50

Would you?

Wang Xia 07:52

I think I will not consider that I just consider the design the color of that.

Arjun Awasthi 07:57

Right? Yeah. So the more important thing for you would be the Hermes bag not necessarily that it's made out of say a crocodile.

Wang Xia 08:05

Yeah, just look of the look of the bag. But not the material of that.

Arjun Awasthi 08:10

That's not important?

Wang Xia 08:11

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:14

So you had mentioned that sometimes some animals are sort of farmed to be made as products.

Wang Xia 08:22

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:22

So I wanted to sort of ask you questions around, how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products are sourced? So you already mentioned the farming aspect, but how do you think the they are sourced totherwise also?

Wang Xia 08:38

Yeah, I just think it's also like, if the some people are just for example, some people they are vegetarian. So they think oh, I will not eat the meat of but just like the pig or the pork and the beef, they are just born as a product so we still eat the meat source is same as the bag or the luxury so if they are farmed and to made by the just they are born as a product so I think it's normal things. But if there are wild animals, and we need to protect the animals, so I think it's not very good to use that so it's depends on the nature of the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 09:26

Right? And from where are they coming from?

Wang Xia 09:28

Yeah, so what is the meaning of the animals? They are product or they are wild animals, we need to protect that.

Arjun Awasthi 09:35

I want to actually ask you, I'll go ahead and skip ahead because I was going to ask some questions about this. Yeah. So do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why or why not? not?

Wang Xia 09:51

Can you repeat?

Arjun Awasthi 09:52

Ethical concerns. So, as you had mentioned, some animals are in the wild and they are protected and so we shouldn't really use them but then you also mentioned that some animals are born as products.

Wang Xia 10:04

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:04

So, what are the ethical concerns that come up? When we talk about using exotic animal skins in fashion?

Wang Xia 10:13

I think for me, I will not consider a lot just like I think they're the product same like the luxuries, Lush or The Body Shop, they will not use animal as test, but it cannot be import in some of the country. So because I'm learning business and finance, so I think for us, for me, I will not consider that but for company they will think of whether to use the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 10:42

Okay. All right. So do you know anything about the wildlife trade? If so, what do you know?

Wang Xia 10:51

I am not very clear about the wildlife trade, because I just, I really like animals, I want to protect the animals, but sometimes protect animals it's beyond my, my ability so I think I will try my best and if other people they might use wild animals, and then beyond the law, I think is the obligation or the the things should have done by the government instead of me.

Arjun Awasthi 11:21

Alright, okay, so it's a much bigger issue than, than just an individual?

Wang Xia 11:27

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 11:28

Okay. So I want I'll give you a definition of this term, known as cognitive dissonance. So cognitive dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors, this discomfort motivates the person to pick one, and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So basically, what this is trying to say is, as human beings, we can hold two different beliefs or two different values in our mind and we can feel a conflict, like should I do this? Or should I do that? But then we choose one over the other and we sort of choose it by justifying it, if that makes sense?

Wang Xia 12:13

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 12:13

Yeah. So do you experience this kind of discomfort when you buy luxury products? If so, how do you get rid of the discomfort or the conflict?

Wang Xia 12:25

I think the this conflict is, is that you spend a lot of money to buy a bag because you can buy a bag in Primark and you're also you can buy the luxury bag so that's the since you're struggling but when I buy the luxury bag, I think I will use that for a long time. So it won't be a waste of money. But if I buy a cheap bag just like in Primark, maybe I will just use that for one month and dispose of that. So that is the struggle for me.

Arjun Awasthi 12:58

So the longevity? And what about the quality? Is that something to consider?

Wang Xia 13:03

Yeah, because I think for most of the luxury, just like the clothes, they are really at a good quality so you can use that for a long time, although it's very expensive. But if you buy something cheap, you will not treasure that you just take us neutral and to put that into the into the machine to wash that.

Arjun Awasthi 13:24

Alright. So again, it's a question about exotic skins now. So if you could buy, inherit or be gifted exotic skin products? Would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or others? How would you justify it? Or have you justified it in the past?

Wang Xia 13:47

I think I won't, because if I buy that, I think I will not buy that, but if I as if the product is as a gift for me, so I will I will not consider whether it is from the skin of the animals who are like that because I think it's the gift or warmhearted of your friends it's not very good to make a judgement of these kind of behavior.

Arjun Awasthi 14:14

Okay, right. So basically, you would appreciate your friend for having given you the gift.

Wang Xia 14:20

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:20

And not try to disrespect them?

Wang Xia 14:22

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 14:25

Have you faced any ethical dilemmas? Again, this is back to when we were talking about ethical concerns. So have you faced an ethical dilemma when buying luxury fashion products? Because you mentioned in the past when you were working, you did buy luxury fashion products and you still buy the clothes and stuff. So do you face any ethical dilemma?

Wang Xia 14:49

Oh, can you repeat?

Arjun Awasthi 14:52

So again, do you face any conflict? Basically, ethically speaking.

Wang Xia 14:57

Just from ethics?

Arjun Awasthi 14:59

Yeah, just from like you're so do you think that it challenges morality? Basically

Wang Xia 15:06

You mean just based just based on the ethic or based also consider?

Arjun Awasthi 15:11

Whatever you would like to consider an answer. That's fine.

Wang Xia 15:14

I think it's a little different because when I work, so I earn a lot of money. So I will buy that. I think, Oh, it's just a treat of my hard work. But when I study, so I, I just received the salary from my mother. So sometimes I will conflict whether I need to buy the product but maybe just like when I finished the progression review of every year, I will still buy one bag.

Arjun Awasthi 15:44

Right. So you're not facing any, like, moral issue when buying it?

Wang Xia 15:49

No, no.

Arjun Awasthi 15:50

it's more to do with whether you have the capacity or capability to buy it?

Wang Xia 15:55

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 15:55

And if you do, then you will buy it.

Wang Xia 15:57

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 15:58

Okay, gotcha. And do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Wang Xia 16:04

I think yes because I really like animals so just as you say, if I if you asked me to buy the product made of the skin of the animals, I will not, but just, it's just a gift I will still receive that. Yeah, but I will treasure that, because I think it's a life of the animal.

Arjun Awasthi 16:26

Okay, that's interesting.

Wang Xia 16:27

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 16:28

Could you talk a little bit about that? The life of the animal and you treasuring it because of that?

Wang Xia 16:33

Because I think it's some animal that died of this product and this product, get back to me so it seemed like I keep these products and because some animals or some people, they sacrifice themselves. Right. All right. So do you have any pets? pet animals? I used to have, but when I got back to the UK, I don't have because I think you cannot to raise animals without any responsibilities because we live in a dormitory and you need to move to this place to other places it's not responsible to raise the animal.

Arjun Awasthi 17:14

And do you think having because you had a pet before? Do you think having a pet influenced how you would buy certain products?

Wang Xia 17:23

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 17:24

In what way?

Wang Xia 17:26

Just Just for example, if I, because I used to raise a dog so I will not buy something made out of the dog skin or the meat of that. I think it's not really good. And also say like a cat, because my friends with a cat so I always go to her home to play with the cat. So if the product is made of the skin of the cat or meat of the cat, I will not buy the product.

Arjun Awasthi 17:54

That's very interesting.

Wang Xia 17:55

Yeah. Because I think if people don't buy it, and business, they will not produce this kind of product. They produce this kind of product because someone needs that.

Arjun Awasthi 18:06

Exactly. Yeah. Thank you. Okay, I guess I will now because you've sort of answered all the questions I had in mind. So is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products made from exotic skins?

Wang Xia 18:30

I think for me, just for the exotic skins, I think it's let me think.

Arjun Awasthi 18:39

Please do take your time.

Wang Xia 18:43

Yeah, because I think the made of the skin skin of the animals is not very considered by Chinese people. So I think it do depend on the cultural background, because I'm not very sure if you have already interviewed a lot of Chinese students, for the Chinese people, they may not consider these kind of things. But I think for some European or Western country citizens, they will think, oh, I need to protect the animals, but I think the protection of the animals, it's not a strong awareness in Chinese.

Arjun Awasthi 19:24

But it's very interesting to bring up the cultural context. So, just to let you know, the UK actually is now the fifth largest consumer of luxury fashion products in the world.

Wang Xia 19:36

Yeah, but also I think the it depends on the income of the people. So if you are in a middle, I think middle of the society so you will try to protect the environment and try to protect the animals. But it's always that with some people they are in the high position where they earn so much money, so they just think how I can make money. But, I think just finding things just for, because I also do some research based on the environment too like that. So it's interesting in the since that a lot of people, famous people, they take the their personal helicopter, for just a emission carbon emission conference, it's really curious, you're going to protect the environment to protect the plants, but you're taking your personal helicopter to that? So I think it depends on the level that the income level and the position of the society of the people, because I think when some people they are going to make a business and make money, they will not think about the environment. In the same same time, if you think about the animals and the environment, you must sacrifice some product or profit of your company so they might struggle, but for the I think the middle income of the society, they will consider whether I need to buy this kind of product, because I want to protect the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 21:10

Do you think then there is also an element that this middle section of society has, where they are aspiring, or they have an ambition?

Wang Xia 21:21

Yeah, because I think they have already got to the enough money for living for eating so they have extra time to protect environment and protect animals but if the people there in the lower income, they just find how I can't find a good job and how I can raise myself, they will not consider oh I need to protect the animals because they just want to protect themselves.

Arjun Awasthi 21:50

Do you think on the other hand, also, sort of middle income people, while they might have time to protect the animals, on the other hand, that you mentioned that they have extra time and money? Do they then go and buy these luxury products as well? That's sort of what I'm trying to ask is do you consider these products to be something that people aspire to? Or want to get?

Wang Xia 22:18

Yeah, I think it's still some people they still want this kind of product. So it is the because different people have different ethical standards.

Arjun Awasthi 22:29

Right.

Wang Xia 22:29

Yeah, some people think oh, I need what what kind of because I think different people will sense the different things they did is right, that some people will say just if there are 10 things you'd like people to choose and some people will pick up 1,2,3,4 things and some people think oh, I will not choose these kind of things. Because they have different ethic standards or level of the ethic standards, they will do the differen things and also some people do think oh, I will save the water and I will save the save the electricity but I just hate the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 23:09

Alright, do you have any other final thoughts before I show you the images have you missed saying anything?

Wang Xia 23:17

I think no but you can inspire me.

Arjun Awasthi 23:22

That's all right. No, I do want to get your ideas and impression so I will show you these five images and they are all fashion products that are made from exotic skins. So, if you could have a look and tell me your impressions and all the images are labeled image A, image B, image C. Yeah, so when talking about them if you could just say what what image you're talking about. So take your time to have a look at these and then.

Wang Xia 24:36

Yeah, I think it's interesting things because for the image A and D, because they are really big, and all of them the leather so I will think oh, this kind of product might be made of the the skin of the animals, although I didn't see the description here and for the Image B, C, D, just B and C I will not consider these kind of things because they are really small and I just focus on the main screen of that just like the clock and also the camera of that. And for this one, I think they have already make a label here. So the first thing I would check the label and then go to the belt. Yeah, so for this product, I would think, oh, it's same like what we talked today, just like the skin of the animals, and they must have something with that but for these two products, I will not to connect and make a connection between that.

Arjun Awasthi 25:39

And out of these products, which ones do you find appealing to you personally?

Wang Xia 25:52

What kind of appealing? You mean I want to buy that?

Arjun Awasthi 25:55

Yeah which one would you consider? if you could?

Wang Xia 26:01

Well, I struggle. I think that bag in image A.

Arjun Awasthi 26:11

Why?

Wang Xia 26:12

Because I am not used to clock. I used to use the hand and my cell phone and for the camera I also less use the camera. And so this bag, I think it's because there is a label of that so not sure why there is for sale or in the library so I will consider that for a belt I also never used a belt. So because image B, C and D are seldom used art for D because it's in the displays on that not sure whether it's for sale or just for display.

Arjun Awasthi 26:51

Oh, no, that's fine. You just consider the bag itself. Not you don't have to pay attention. Because you know, it is yeah, it's a crocodile skin bag. Yeah, both of them are. So it's again, it's about the utility for you whether you will use it. Yeah, right.

Wang Xia 27:14

I still think might be A because this one is more obvious that it is made of the crocodile skin, but this one it's not sure. Yeah, yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 27:26

Okay. Any other impressions about this?

Wang Xia 27:32

I think interesting things because we have already talked about the skin of the animals so you have already remind me, or maybe when I buy the product is asked image B and C I do not think these kind of things, right? Yeah, just focus on the oh it's a clock it's, it's a watch, it's really great. And I will not think oh, the belt is made of the skin. So before we have the interview, and now I think about that. And also I also have a camera, but I seldom use that. I think maybe my camera, they also have

Arjun Awasthi 28:07

this. Yeah, and this is lizard skin. Oh,

Wang Xia 28:11

I will double check my camera because I never think about that when we talk before we talk. This is

Arjun Awasthi 28:17

what is very interesting about so this is why I also include showing people a camera and a clock or a watch, because I think there are many products that actually use exotic skin.

Wang Xia 28:30

Yeah, but we ignore that because we just focus on the product itself but if you buy a bag or shoes, because all of that is made of the skin of the animals, you will consider that but some people they will ignore the small things.

Arjun Awasthi 28:44

And on the other hand, I feel that some people really care about that. It's the crocodile skin to show it. That's why it looks so obvious on these bigger products.

Wang Xia 28:56

Yeah, and for the last one, because I think a lot of girls they will not use the belt because it's not attractive and also you can see the girls use the belt, they just take care of the fashion. But not the not the leather of that but for mens, I think it's totally different. They will care about the material of that but for girls they just care about the fashion.

Arjun Awasthi 29:17

Right and how it makes them look.

Wang Xia 29:19

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 29:20

They're not really bothered about the material, per se.

Wang Xia 29:23

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 29:24

But more about the look of the belt. Okay. Yes, anything else you would like to add?

Wang Xia 29:26

Yeah, because there are a lot of friends around me who also buy the belts, but we just think it looks good, but we don't care if it's made of Gucci or Louis Vuitton. It doesn't matter. Yeah. And also from these products, I just noticed the brand and labor of that. So DND Yeah, for rice that of that maybe I don't know that still ever not to double check the label or the brand of the product, I just say oh how it looks and then the materials of that.

Arjun Awasthi 30:20

So then is the label important?

Wang Xia 30:23

Yeah, sometimes sometimes Yeah, because I prefer some brands. So, when I when the brand they will have the same, same price so I will compare the brand, just like if there is a watch, or there is a clothes in Burberry, and also in Louis Vuitton and they have the same price so I will compare the two brands, which one I should buy.

Arjun Awasthi 30:49

Andnd the quality then also?

Wang Xia 30:51

Yeah, So just like I think, maybe, in my opinion, I think the clothes in Louis Vuitton might be more expensive than Burberry, so if the two it's the two product.products they are in the same price so I maybe prefer Louis Vuitton because I think it's more cheap, although they are in the same price range.

Arjun Awasthi 31:14

Because essentially, they're the same kind of brand category.

Wang Xia 31:18

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 31:19

And so you're going to go with the one that's more affordable, even in that context.

Wang Xia 31:23

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 31:23

Yeah, okayokay, great. That's been very useful. I'm just checking to make sure I haven't missed anything to ask. No, I think I have I have everything. So thank you very much.

Wang Xia 31:39

It's interesting. Yeah, because I never noticed this kind of product, they will have the ethic consideration because I think the ethical consideration just for the bags and shoes. But I just noticed that all the belts of the clock and also the leather here is also something related to the animals. Yeah. Thank you so much.

Arjun Awasthi 32:07

Thank you for participating it really helps me.

SPEAKERS

Sun Lan, Arjun Awasthi

Arjun Awasthi 00:02

All right. So thank you so much for joining me for this interview. And I'll just tell you a little brief about how it's going to work. So I have a list of questions. Yeah. So it's basically a semi structured interview. So I'm going to ask these questions, but based on our conversation, I might ask you some other questions. In the middle of the asking, I'll also give you a definition of a term. And there'll be some questions based off of that. And finally, I'll show you a series of images. And I want to get your impressions on those. Okay, so to begin, could you please tell me about yourself and your background,

Sun Lan 00:38

I was born and raised in China, I'm 23 years old and I come from a family my father is a lawyer, my mom is just a normal worker and this is my first and my last year studying here because I only have one year program, a postgraduate student my major is global advertising and branding. So that has something to do with, you know, luxury and yeah, that's all about me.

Arjun Awasthi 01:07

That's wonderful. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Sun Lan 01:13

I think, when I'm studying advertising back in my back in China, during my bachelor school, we don't came across many related to luxury, such as brands and their advertising, things like that, and a fashion of course, but when I'm studying in the Winchester School of Art, they have many modules and content related to luxury, we especially have a lesson related to luxury. So I think that really got me to look into it and yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 01:48

so what about it makes you interested in it aside from just the classes or the modules that you have taken?

Sun Lan 01:54

I think I'm really interested in the signs in it, because maybe that's because I'm doing advertising major. And that got me to think why they use these signs in their commercials, not this one because signs maybe mean some related to social status maybe it's something that consumer will want. So that

Arjun Awasthi 02:17

so the signs or the science and signs like symbols?

Sun Lan 02:21

Symbols.

Arjun Awasthi 02:21

Okay, great. Thank you. And what kinds of fashion products or accessories do you buy?

Sun Lan 02:28

It's a Louis Vuitton belt. Yeah, I just bought it for my father. Yeah. Do you want to hear a detailed story about it?

Arjun Awasthi 02:36

Yes, please!

Sun Lan 02:37

Yeah, because I think my there's a lot of story. That's okay, we have my mom have a friend and the friend's daughter study in Australia. And she started to work part time and finally got his father got her father a belt, I think it might be a Gucci belt or a Louis Vuitton. And then my mom wanted to let others know maybe let her friends know that her daughter is doing well as well. And after she, I never asked for money from my family. I always work by myself. And I use this money that I you know, get through hard work and got my father a luxury product. Personally, I'm not very interested in luxury products but I think that my means to my parents friends, that what their doing daughter is good. So yeah, that's why I got my father a belt.

Arjun Awasthi 03:44

So okay, so you said you're personally not interested in it, but, but there must be something about it that made you interested in buying it right?

Sun Lan 03:53

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 03:53

Obviously, you mentioned that it means to your parents friends that their daughter is doing well but how important is the brand reputation and the status symbol associated with these products for you? Right. Yeah, that makes sense. And how about yourself? Do you tend to follow fashion trends?

Sun Lan 04:07

Status? Yeah, I think we all know, like, Louis Vuitton, and Gucci, Prada, brands like that and they are, I think, especially Chinese will really love this fashion brand and luxury brands and when I'm researching about men's belts, I found they are more much, much more expensive brand, maybe like high end men's suit. They also provide belt but is way more expensive and they might not be recognizable for Chinese people. So I think I bought an LV belt and it has a logo on it. So yeah, that's mainly because people were pursuing or perceive this to be like wealthy or like good, good quality? Yeah. If it was a very expensive brand, but nobody has heard of it, I won't buy it. Not really I, if it was something very interesting, because fashion is always linked with maybe music, and maybe artwork and when that pop up, like on my social media, I might click into it, to find out maybe Kanye West do that thing and maybe some culture music was related to it. But if you ask me, Well, I like looking to the website and just wrote down about the products I want. Okay, and how would you describe your then personal sense of style

or fashion? I think must be very simple and useful. I'm kind of like functionalism I'm not, I'm not sure how to call it but I really love like Japanese style. It just simple one color and very clean. And you just work it in when your work or when you're casual. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 06:27

Great. So, if you had the chance to get a luxury item, such as a handbag or a belt that was made from exotic skin, and now exotic skin refers to things that are made from crocodile alligators, snake, lizard, that kind of leather. Yeah. So would you consider buying it or owning it?

Sun Lan 06:48

No, I won't buy it. Because I think a lot of belts or bags are made from maybe calf or sheep? I don't know. Yeah, it's from the animals that we usually know of but it was when it was from a crocodile, maybe snake I have watched a lot of like, like TV advertising, telling us not to buy such stuff.

Arjun Awasthi 07:19

Okay, what kind of advertising?

Sun Lan 07:22

It's like on TV. So you have to when you stop the trade of such animal products, then you can stop from killing them and make them extinct? Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 07:37

And maybe if you didn't buy it yourself, but what if someone gifted it to you?

Sun Lan 07:44

When it was a gift, I might consider it because already I already got it. And because people usually give to each other. If he gives me a gift, I might consider giving back. But for this one that he just gave me, and maybe I will keep it because well, that's a gift.

Arjun Awasthi 08:07

And what do you think so you yourself personally wouldn't buy it? But you would keep keep it if it was gifted? Yeah. So then what about these kinds of exotic skins is appealing to people? What makes them attracted to these kinds of products?

Sun Lan 08:25

I think there is a [inaudible] in Chinese, if the things is very unique, and they have maybe low in the quantity, then they will be more expensive. And I think that's the reason why people would like it because it's very unique. And it's hard to get maybe it's illegal to get. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 08:47

Interesting. Illegal to get so does that make it attractive if it's illegal to get?

Sun Lan 08:54

I, yeah, I will say I think so because I have a relative back in China and he has a lot of illegal animal product back in his home, including maybe snake skin and tiger skin that is and a monkey in his home so that is totally illegal.

Arjun Awasthi 09:14

how do you feel about that?

Sun Lan 09:16

I feel shocked. I mean, not everybody has the chance to get sorry to get such products. And I think he did so because he found it very well not everyone can buy them from a store or from legal how do I say that? Legal merchandising. Yeah. But he's got it to show that I have something that people don't have.

Arjun Awasthi 09:48

Very interesting, actually. So, I guess have you ever had an experience so you talked about your relative obviously you've seen the skin and everything. But have you had an experience where you've been maybe in a shop? Or have you gone to a store where you have seen it or handled it? Or thought about maybe I can, you know, maybe buy it?

Sun Lan 10:00

Buy it? Let me think back from the shop I've been not really but when I was traveling in Sri Lanka, I think they they have products made of made from the elephant. How do?

Arjun Awasthi 10:35

Ivory?

Sun Lan 10:35

Yeah. Yeah, yeah. I think that might be illegal or that is made purely from Yeah. Elephant. So you have they have to kill the elephant to get the ivory.

Arjun Awasthi 10:48

Ivory. Yeah. Yeah, it is illegal. But what? So you sort of were like this what about it attracted you to it?

Sun Lan 10:58

I just saw they are sewing such thing and people told me wow, this is made from ivory. And so I especially look into that because as far as I'm, I'm aware, like ivory is not, it would it's not legal for people to trade. So yeah, that that, that made me look into it. But I won't consider buying it because it's expensive. I don't think I have the necessity to buy such things back in my home.

Arjun Awasthi 11:31

Okay. So I'm curious to know, would you how do you think these exotic skins are sourced? Where do they come from?

Sun Lan 11:45

Maybe poorer countries? I think. China? Definitely and maybe Africa, and just Southern Asia? And maybe South America.

Arjun Awasthi 12:04

And so then how do you think so this is where they're from? But how do people obtain it?

Sun Lan 12:11

Just by killing, killing the wild animal and get what they want?

Arjun Awasthi 12:23

And do you know anything about the wildlife trade?

Sun Lan 12:26

Wildlife trade? I know there is a cheetah conservation and the cheetah is caught by hunters and they trade the small cheetah to maybe something somebody would want and we want to keep them as a pet. And yeah, that's, I think that's part of wildlife trading.

Arjun Awasthi 12:51

Yeah, the exotic pet trade. Definitely. Yeah. Okay, so obviously, we've established that you have not personally bought a product made of exotic skin. But you have bought the Louis Vuitton belt. Would you tell me describe what it's made of?

Sun Lan 13:11

It's made of I think it's made of how to call the skin it's bull skin or that's from the bull

Arjun Awasthi 13:21

Boar?

Sun Lan 13:22

Like like B-U-L-L.

Arjun Awasthi 13:24

Okay, bull.

Sun Lan 13:25

Bull skin. Yeah. Yeah and when I was searching it, because I think belt made from exotic skin might be very expensive and usually if that's the price I can afford it is usually made from lamb or bull.

Arjun Awasthi 13:44

If if you could afford it, if you had the money, would you buy it? The exotic skin belt?

Sun Lan 13:53

Not for me personally, but if that is a brand that my parents really love, I might consider it but I'm not willing to do so.

Arjun Awasthi 14:08

Okay. Great. So I'm now going to give you a definition okay. So this is a psychological term, which is known as cognitive dissonance.

Sun Lan 14:20

Sorry?

Arjun Awasthi 14:21

Cognitive dissonance.

Sun Lan 14:22

Cognitive, yes?

Arjun Awasthi 14:24

So, it basically means that it is a state of mental discomfort that arises when you hold two conflicting or different beliefs, ideas or behaviors. So this discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So basically, what it's trying to say is that sometimes we may have a value, but then our behavior is different to our value, and we might feel a little conflict. So then we choose one over the other. That's cognitive dissonance. So do you experience this kind of discomfort when you buy a luxury product? If so, how do you eliminate the discomfort?

Sun Lan 15:14

That exactly happens when I'm looking for the belt. At first, I would like to give my father a belt that does not have a large logo, I can show you the picture of it if you like? And then I inquired I asked my mom, like, I've looked into this belt, which one you consider to be it has a logo on it considered to be better. And my mom said that one with a logo on it. And that is very, like conflicting my own beliefs because I don't like products that has large logo, especially luxury logo on it. It just made me feel like you're showing off but I think that's the reason why my mom would like me to get my father a belt like that, because she want my father to show off like to let people ask about his brand about his belt, and then he could answer well, that's why my daughter as a gift. So yeah, I think that is the my parents, especially my mom's idea but personally, I just felt I just feel like my dad would not even like the belt that much, because my dad is also like me, he doesn't like large logos. Well, that is but finally I think my mom, let me do this for her reason and that's acceptable so I follow her instruction. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 15:30

Yeah, sure. I already asked you a little bit about this, but I asked this question again. If you could buy if you had the means to buy, inherit or be gifted the products that are made of exotic skin? Would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or to other people?

Sun Lan 17:28

That's let us, for example, a friend of mine gave me a belt maybe a bag made from exotic skin I might not come up to him or her like, this is not right, I don't like it, please return it, I won't say so but for me I might just keep it and not wear it. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:00

Okay so you wouldn't talk about it?

Sun Lan 18:03

Yeah, no.

Arjun Awasthi 18:04

Okay so because you wouldn't use it you wouldn't feel the need to justify?

Sun Lan 18:10

Yeah, because if I'm not wearing it, I won't feel like I'm doing something wrong or I killed the animals stuff like that. But I think it's a waste also just to keep it I don't know how to do it deal with it because people already got this as a gift and from the maybe from some brand from store and they already made from live animals to products. I don't know what I can do to justify it.

Arjun Awasthi 18:40

Okay, yeah, because it's somebody else's?

Sun Lan 18:44

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 18:44

They've done it?

Sun Lan 18:45

Yeah. but because like the advertising said there is a need so people will filling someone's need or desire for such products. And if we don't have such desire or need maybe they won't be killed but I think that's not what I can control.

Arjun Awasthi 19:02

have you faced any ethical issues when buying certain luxury products?

Sun Lan 19:14

Ethical issues?

Arjun Awasthi 19:15

So, like a moral dilemma. Like a conflict.

Sun Lan 19:20

When I'm buying luxury or it's just?

Arjun Awasthi 19:23

Just luxury, yeah. Well, if you have bought exotic you can also talk about that.

Sun Lan 19:31

I for me when I normally buy luxury, I think I have more belief when I buy things, if they are made from very, like cost efficient or very eco friendly I might feel more like willing to buy such stuff? And if it was luxury brands but it got me feeling like when people who are into luxury, they don't really care, care about such stuff? So I don't know. But personally for me, I Yes, I have such moral [inaudible].

Arjun Awasthi 20:14

Could you talk a little bit more about people who are into luxury that they don't care about this stuff?

Sun Lan 20:21

I think back in my home, I don't really know many people who have a lot of luxury pieces. But when I got here, many of my classmates are Chinese and they are really look like into luxury products. Maybe it's their bags, their shoes, and their jackets and I think I'm not to talk about the fashion itself but I think you just wear that many luxury, like logo on yourself, and there are different different brands it's a little bit lame. So yeah, but I think that's a way to spend their money because they are wealthy. And that's a way to show that they are wealthy, but maybe bad fashion taste.

Arjun Awasthi 21:13

Okay. You're being honest. Yeah, that's fine. No, that's really interesting, because you also said that they don't care when you were talking about the sustainability aspect as well.

Sun Lan 21:30

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 21:30

So, could you talk a little bit about that?

Sun Lan 21:35

I think maybe that is a culture difference. When I realized when I got here in the UK, back in China, not really not many people look into the sustainability, things like that, if a brand is showing that they're really putting effort in sustainability, I don't think there's many people well that will be really interested in it. But in the UK, I noticed many brands from high end to maybe just very cheap brands, they all promote their sustainability, and maybe their inclusivity, things like that. It's the different values that brands persuade.

Arjun Awasthi 22:23

No, that's fascinating, that cultural differences very interesting to me. I am now going to ask you some questions related to animals. So do you believe there are ethical issues or ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why or why not?

Sun Lan 22:51

Of course, I have such beliefs like not to have exotic skin. In fashion, yeah, if I buy fashion stuff, I will not buy such fashion stuff. Because I grew up watching a documentary, it's about wildlife in Africa. I

think that somehow got me to not like some sort of belief that people are doing bad things to them, and they're facing extinction. So for me, when I buy stuff, I won't.

Arjun Awasthi 23:35

And so then I naturally how do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Sun Lan 23:45

Like, animal in general or exotic animals?

Arjun Awasthi 23:49

However you want to talk about it? It's up to you.

23:52

animals? Well, if I buy meat, or maybe chicken, in Lidl or Waitrose, I won't think of chicken, a live chicken, but if I'm buying something very unique, or that's a kind of animal product that's made from very extinct animal, I might think of that animal. It depends on how people provide such products. If you kept the chicken and lamb or maybe pork or pigs, like in a modernized way, and it is I think yeah, animal welfare, miss the animal welfare and I think that won't bother me. Yeah. But if I know they got this animal out of illegal method, and they sell it to other people, yet I will be an issue.

Arjun Awasthi 25:03

So I guess you are saying that some animals are different to other animals?

25:11

When I'm buying things, yeah, that yeah, you can think so. But it got me really thinking that isn't a chicken not similar to a snake? I think they're equal, but somehow I just end up eating chicken not snake, so yeah, you got me I have a conflict.

Arjun Awasthi 25:39

I'm sorry.

Sun Lan 25:42

Yes. Okay. It's interesting.

Arjun Awasthi 25:45

So do you have any pets? Pets? Yeah,

25:47

I have a dog. Actually, I have three dogs back in my home. And I brought one with me in the UK so she lives with me. I, I I think I can confirm myself to be an animal lover. I love all kinds of animals like birds, and dogs, cats, turtles, yeah, things like that.

Arjun Awasthi 26:12

So would you say that having a tech influences your buying or purchasing decision?

Sun Lan 26:18

Of course. Yeah, definitely. There are a lot of people back in China still eat meat from many animals and some animals that we like, we usually feel like we shouldn't eat such animals, dog, for example. But when I'm having a dog, I have her for a long time, maybe 13 years. She's very old now. I feel like I have consciously built a belief about animal trading and about, for example, dog eating, how they transport the dogs, how they capture capture others dogs and to serve it on others table. Yeah, yeah, that that is just bad and I especially looking to a documentary about this about how people save the dogs many of them are trade street dogs and some of them are pet dogs. They're just stolen from their owner. And finally, maybe next day, it's a I think it's a large system. It's a it is it has that sort of organization to caught the dog, transport and serve round the table. Many people are involved in it so if there is no rules or laws to control it, yeah, I'm worried about my dog will be caught one day, and maybe someone will eat her.

Arjun Awasthi 28:07

Let's hope not!

Sun Lan 28:09

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 28:11

Okay, no, but that's very fascinating to me, because it's clear that your relationship with animals has an effect on what kind of articles and items that you buy and it's also very interesting for me to note that you're watching many different documentaries, and reading about different things has also influenced your decisions.

Sun Lan 28:35

Yes. Of course.

Arjun Awasthi 28:36

That's very interesting. So is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skins?

Sun Lan 28:56

I think if I want to put a conclusion, I've always felt very passive about all this, because I don't feel like people will change. If there's the person that he usually buy product like this, then he will continue doing so if there are still brands, or companies providing such products to them and actually, I don't know how people might change maybe change over time. Maybe the children might like me, I don't know. But generally speaking, I'm a little passive about this.

Arjun Awasthi 29:39

Yeah. It made me think as well, because when we think of exotic skins, usually we think of very expensive products, as you had mentioned, that we can't really buy, but at the same time big companies like Gucci, or like Louis Vuitton you can access these exotic skins?

Sun Lan 30:03

Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 30:03

So, you know, it's still there.

Sun Lan 30:06

Yeah, it's still on sale. And people would just if they got money that they don't feel like if their moral is good, they don't bother by this, they might just buy this.

Arjun Awasthi 30:23

So any other final thoughts?

Sun Lan 30:27

I think that's all.

Arjun Awasthi 30:29

Okay, great. So now I'll show you a series of images. So these are all products that are made of exotic skins. Okay, so I want you can take your time to have a look at them. And then you can start talking about your first impressions. And when you were talking about the images, if you could name them by image A, image B as they are labelled so that I can.

Sun Lan 30:53

Yeah. So I'm going to talk about how I feel about them?

Arjun Awasthi 31:15

Yeah.

31:17

Okay, image A, it's a black purse with a exotic it's obviously exotic, made from exotic skin, maybe crocodile and it just give people a shiny it looks expensive from my side and it is very shiny, and very, I don't know. It has, all these reflect reflection. I think probably that's why people would want to buy one and they are parallel. So it got me wondering if they made from the skin maybe of the stomach of a crocodile? Yeah. Well, if I'm looking into this picture, I would think how the animal skin is like, and maybe they got this piece from what part of the animal and how they kill it. So yeah, that's image A. Image B, I don't really think of watches but it made me realize that the how do you call this?

Arjun Awasthi 32:44

The strap.

Sun Lan 32:45

Yeah, the strap are also made from such skin because they are small pieces so it won't really bother you I was wondering if my dad has such because that looks very similar. Similar to his, so yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 33:04

So how do you feel about that now knowing this that your dad maybe has the alligator skin watch strap?

Sun Lan 33:14

Look at this watch and I might think of my dad's one so that won't really made me feel bad maybe because it has small pieces not as large as that one and maybe the most important thing about this is the watch itself and you can change this so if you're buying in person made out of such crocodile skin like image A you're definitely buying such stuff and you're aware of it but if you're buying a watch and maybe you can change the scrap yes sorry strap yeah the strap part and keep this part so yeah, I think you can. People buy the most important thing is the watch not the strap. Yeah, I think this one not as made me feel bad as image A. Image C I don't really know that people can make exotic skin on camera that made me very amazed and stunned and I just feel bad looking. There are so many products that can use exotic skin. I mean, I don't know what's the point to use it on camera. Yeah, that's how I feel looking to the image C. And image D there is another purse, and I read from the content, it shows Crystal? Christies? I think that is a Hong Kong company showing, doing all sorts of bidding, maybe the bidding such purse and then it must be very expensive. And it shows how the purse are trade maybe they are looking for a buyer from like through a bidding company and people will bid on it. Because people would really like such stuff. Yeah, that's image D. And image E, that's a belt. I think the belt, it has the brand logo on it. It is it is a simple belt, but you can tell from the skin type that it is made from exotic skin and the brand let me know that it is real skin, not sort of fake skin that just look like exotic skin. Yeah. So if I came across this in a shop, if I go to luxury shop one day, I might not choose this one.

Arjun Awasthi 36:34

Out of all of these images, is there any image that you sort of like?

Sun Lan 36:41

I sort of like? I think I like image B because I think for other products the exotic skin are directly attached to are directly connected with the product. So you can remove you can't remove this, that this part. But for the watch, people are buying the watch itself. And I think I can change this one and this is made from small pieces. So yeah, I think this one I like the most. Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 37:23

Any final thoughts? Impressions?

Sun Lan 37:26

about all this?

Arjun Awasthi 37:27

Just yeah.

Sun Lan 37:28

it just really made me aware that there are so many products, like different kinds are made from animal skins, exotic skins, and the camera got me the most because you just use camera to take photos why you use skin on it? I don't I don't get it about the camera one. So if a camera is using exotic skin, then maybe for the phone of our phone case, or other stuff could make from exotic skin. So yeah, that's a big, enormous trading of all these such skins. Yeah. Just made me feel how people got from the animal skin to use all sorts of things. Okay,

Arjun Awasthi 38:31

thank you very much. Very useful and very informative.

Sun Lan 38:36

I hope my background of advertising won't affect this one.

Arjun Awasthi 38:41

That's fine. I mean, because I'm going to shut this because I mean if you're a consumer.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Zhau Hui

Arjun Awasthi 00:02

Thank you so much for participating in this study. So basically, I'm going to ask you a few questions. It's a semi structured interview so based on our conversation, I might ask you some other questions that I might find relevant. In the middle of asking you questions I'll give you a definition and there'll be some questions based on that. And finally, I'll show you a series of images and I would like your impressions on those.

Zhau Hui 00:27

Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 00:27

All right. Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Zhau Hui 00:30

No.

Arjun Awasthi 00:31

Okay, great. So can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Zhau Hui 00:35

Okay, so I just finished my first year in University of Southampton. I'm in, I'm studying in Winchester, fashion management and marketing. So, I'm quite interested in fashion and that's why I'm participating in this research and so you can just call me Star, just because it's easier. Yeah. And because I have seen through the like, the another file that you sent to me and this research is also about the leather products and luxury industry. Me personally, I actually I don't own a lot of them but I, I am interested at this whole whole thing about leather products in the in this industry and how these animals have been treated. Like that's why I'm doing this interview.

Arjun Awasthi 01:33

Okay, great. Thank you so much. So to begin, what do you think about luxury fashion and is it something that interests you?

Zhau Hui 01:41

So I think there was this phase, probably when I was about 13 14, I was really obsessed, of owning a luxury goods, but like, I didn't really get one but I was wanting to have one. Because I feel like all those people who I think are successful, beautiful, that I want to be one, they all have all kinds of luxury goods. So, at that time, I was just thinking no matter what it is, as long as it has that brand's logo on it, I want one. But as I grew up, I started thinking that I started to think that the luxury goods are actually not that it's just not it doesn't, so the price that they given us, it's much higher than the costs and the only

reason why they're giving us such a high price is just because of the because of the brand. And also I've heard a lot about how they are using cheap laborers. So I started to feel like maybe it's just not something that I really want. But I have to admit that I still sometimes get this kind of, even though I know that it's not worth it even though I know there's like cheap labor behind all of this sometimes when I see a celebrity owning one, and if it's like really good looking. I still want one.

Arjun Awasthi 03:19

Yeah, fair enough. And so then what kind of products do you buy? What are you interested in? And so what kind of stuff aside from jewelry do you own because you mentioned that if you want a bag you'd ask your parents for it?

03:24

So because of I can't afford a bag and also I think it's a bit too much like even though so if I really want one I might ask my parents for one but I feel like it's just not really worth it. So if I want to purchase one, it's probably just rings or earrings because I feel like they are more worth it because it's cheaper and also it has the brand's value on it it's not like bags and also it's more lowkey you know because on the bag there are normally big logos that I don't want anymore. So if it's just like little piece of jewelry, I might be like when people are asking I can say oh it's from what what brand but when people don't pay attention to it, they don't know what I'm wearing.

04:28

I think clothing, yeah, I actually I don't have any bags from luxury brands at all. But clothing Yeah. But that was when I was 14 and people around me they were all purchasing super expensive stuff. So I was like if I want if I want to blend in, I need one so I was buying like supreme hoodies all of those but luckily I still I'm still wearing it lucky the quality is not too bad. So I'm not feeling like regretting it because I can still wear it. But if it's just like piece of if it's like, falling apart that I couldn't wear anymore, I'm going to regret so much.

Arjun Awasthi 05:09

Yeah, so you mentioned a little bit about the brand, itself so how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products to you?

Zhau Hui 05:23

Not so much actually. I think even though I do go just with certain luxury brands, but it's not because of, for example, I think a lot of people like Chanel or Hermes, because it's sort of representing high status in society. But my favorite luxury brand is actually Vivienne Westwood, which is like, slightly cheaper but the reason why it's because I think that that brand has more history that is like, interested to me. And even though Chanel and Hermes is like more higher status, and even though it's like more expensive, it doesn't really matter to me, all I care is, for example, Vivienne Westwood herself, she has a lot of interesting story, and her personality is really interested to me. And also her product, the products are very unique. So that's why I care the product and the history behind brand.

Arjun Awasthi 06:21

Very interesting. And would you say you're somebody who follows fashion trends?

Zhau Hui 06:27

Not really, I don't think so but if I don't follow the trend, but if that trend is like, if I like it, I will purchase certain items that's like trendy at the moment. But I'm not like always going after what's trendy.

Arjun Awasthi 06:45

And how would you describe your personal style?

Zhau Hui 06:49

I, I think comfortable is like the most important thing to me. So I actually buy a lot of I own a lot of over oversized clothing, hoodies, t shirts, trousers, and also maybe a a little bit cartoonish blend with hip hop.

Arjun Awasthi 07:13

Very interesting. So, if you had the chance to obtain a luxury item, such as a handbag made from exotic skin, so exotic skin is leather that's made from crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard. So not necessarily buying it yourself, but perhaps being gifted it. Would you consider owning it?

Zhau Hui 07:33

Well, I wouldn't buy it. But if it was it was given by some it really depends if it's my good friend or my family. And when they purchasing the bag they might not think about it's like exotic leather. They just thought oh, it fits her, she'll like it. And if that if that's why they give it to me I'll take it because the transaction has already been made. They've already put money into a thing and the reason why they have they give it to me, it's because they think I will like it. So I think I'll take it because I don't want them to feel like oh, why isn't she taking it? I bought this for her. It's quite expensive. I don't want them to feel like that.

Arjun Awasthi 08:19

And what do you consider appealing, If anything, about luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skins?

Zhau Hui 08:29

I don't really get the question.

Arjun Awasthi 08:31

So if there is anything that you find appealing, or interesting or attractive about luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skins, such as alligator, crocodile, snake, or lizard?

Zhau Hui 08:47

So, I know there's one thing that a lot of rich people care about when they purchasing leather products is that is 100% true or real leather. For me, I might get appealed to leather products because of its look, because it might be very good looking, but I will really want that to be a human made leather. Because I do know how cruel the whole process is to get get those skin off the animals.

Arjun Awasthi 09:23

And I guess I'll just jump into it. So what do you think about the cruelty? Could you describe it for me? What kind of cruelty is it?

Zhau Hui 09:31

So there was this I did a project and it was a little bit about the thing we're talking about. So I watched a video that record the whole process of getting rid of skin from the animals. So I actually don't want to say how they managed to do that because I think it was an alligator and it was alive and they were just ripping off the skins and it was just really bloody the host scene I wasn't, I wasn't there to watch the whole thing. But what I knows is that it was it was alive. And I mean, it will be it will be it is still very cruel but if they could at least kill it before, it might be a slightly better still, they just kill it while it was alive.

Arjun Awasthi 10:20

That's a very graphic visual.

Zhau Hui 10:22

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 10:23

But so you saw that video and what how do you think these exotic skins are sourced then?

Zhau Hui 10:32

Oh, I think there's a I actually don't really know about that but what I noticed is that they are the luxury brands, they're definitely purchasing these skins in a very low cost, and then selling it to the market in a very higher prices and I do think there's like a, like, organized organization that is doing all the things such as hunting down those animals and then getting rid of the skins. But they're probably also making a lot of money from it. But I actually don't know how they did that. Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 11:18

And do you know anything about the wildlife trade?

Zhau Hui 11:23

Not really.

Arjun Awasthi 11:25

So basically, the trade of wild animals and their skins. So do you have any idea about?

Zhau Hui 11:31

Oh, yeah, heard of it? So but I don't know what exactly it is. I mean, I know what you're talking about. Yeah.Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 11:39

No, that's fine. That's okay. So now I'm going to give you a definition. So there is this term known as cognitive dissonance. It's a psychological term. Basically, it's a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. So this discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So it's basically that feeling when you have one value, and you hold that value deeply, but then you're performing a behavior.

Zhau Hui 12:18

That's the opposite.

Arjun Awasthi 12:20

So how do you, you know, reconcile that and figure that out?

Zhau Hui 12:25

You know, you mean, for example, if it's in a situation where my friends or my family gave me a leather product, okay. So my value is that I won't purchase this product, if it's just me. But if they give it to me, and I do understand that they won't get a refund, I just, I have to sort of just tell myself, they've already done it, I will take it because I care about them. But I'll also tell them, maybe next time, let's buy something else or maybe we can do a DIY gifts instead of leather products. And I'll try to change their minds on it. Because I think my friends or my families, when they buy it, they don't really they didn't buy it, because it's leather goods, they just bought it because they think it's a good gift to me. So I think as I as I tell them, it's really cruel, the whole process behind it, I think they will also stop buying this.

Arjun Awasthi 13:32

That's very interesting. Have you yourself experienced this kind of discomfort when you have bought any luxury product?

Zhau Hui 13:40

Not really, because I couldn't afford any and also because when I buy I only buy jewelry, so there was no leather goods jewelry.

Arjun Awasthi 13:48

Yeah. Do you have any ethical concerns when you're buying jewelry?

Zhau Hui 13:52

So, I would like to know what where the jewelry has been made and whether the labor has has been treated well, so yeah, that's the main thing I care about.

Arjun Awasthi 14:07

So if you had the money, and the and you could access these luxury products that are made from exotic skin, would you consider buying it?

Zhau Hui 14:21

No because I think they're rich people who think that owning a leather, luxury goods, it's what representing their their states or their personality, and they literally care so much, whether that is like

100% real leather. I just don't get it because you're rich. I know that you can buy anything you want, but just at least care about the animals, just even just a little bit. So even though I have the money, hopefully one day, I wouldn't buy any.

Arjun Awasthi 14:56

Have you ever seen people with these kinds of fashion products?

Zhau Hui 15:00

I think, yeah, I think there are a lot of people on the streets just walking around with leather bags. I don't know if they're fake. But I've seen a lot of people with, I think Hermes is like, leather goods, right, and it's alligator. So I've seen a lot, especially when I go to London, and those rich areas, people are wearing this. But if it's me, and if one day, I really need one to sort of, for example, if I go to a very important meeting, and I want someone, the other people to think I, I, I sort of have, like, the ability or the power, I might just get a like a fake one, which is not real leather, and which is less pricey, but like, a really good good details, one so that people couldn't tell. But I feel good with it, because I know it's not real leather.

Arjun Awasthi 15:50

Okay, that was actually going to be my other question. Oh, how would you justify? Oh, yeah. So have you faced any, we already talked about a little bit with the jewelry, but have you faced any or experienced any ethical concerns when buying luxury fashion products? Or just in your experience of luxury fashion? have you faced any ethical concerns or moral dilemmas?

Zhau Hui 16:18

Because I actually don't buy a lot of them but I do go to luxury stores with my friends and I think when my friends are purchasing stuff, they they don't have the ethical concerns, sometimes, they just if these products, like what they want is really good looking they'll just purchase it no matter where it has been made, no matter what is the material of it. Yeah, but me I do think about where it has been made, and also the labor and also the material stuff. I didn't yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 16:51

And what do you think about when your friends are buying these products? You mentioned that they just care about the look of it. Is there anything else that you think? So how do they justify buying these kind of products, basically?

Zhau Hui 17:05

They just so I'm not talking about like really close friends to me, I'm talking about like school friends. Yeah. So because because I've said I would tell them stop buying leather products, but that's like to the best friends. So the school friends, they're like, I think they're just careless to a lot of stuff for them money buys them that everything. So no matter what ethical problem that product have had. They just don't care. They don't even have to justify their feelings when they purchase those because they just really don't care. It's like how Kardashians never close the tap of their sink like that. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 17:44

That's a funny example. It's interesting. So do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion?

Zhau Hui 17:56

Yeah, of course. Because like, it's cruel, isn't it the process like and also they are not, like only killing alligators. I think they're also killing those animals in danger, I believe. So, I think there's a really big issue not to human like to the whole planet, because those animals are in danger. And we do need we do need to keep those species. Right, because it's kind of like, like a part of our, like, whole Earth community.

Arjun Awasthi 18:30

Yeah, that's really interesting. And how do your feelings towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Zhau Hui 18:38

I love dogs and cats. So when I buying anything, even though it's not like luxury, so anything that is for example made with fur because it's like warmer, for example, with rabbit furs, or goose furs. I would buy those products because I know they just like taking off the furs and the furs will like grow out again. So they're not killing those animals. But for example, when I'm buying like a regular leather boots, I would consider not consider I would definitely buy 100% human made because it's actually cheaper and more ethical.

Arjun Awasthi 19:20

So when you're talking about human made leather, what kind of leather do you?

Zhau Hui 19:24

Oh, I actually don't know what kind of leather that is. I mean, the, the, the seller, they just put on like 100% human made and it is cheaper than the real leather. So I mean, there's no point of them using a real leather and then selling it in a cheaper price. So I know when they are saying it's 100% human made it is because it's cheaper.

Arjun Awasthi 19:48

I am interested to know do you have any pets?

Zhau Hui 19:51

Oh no, but I hope I have one because I'm a student so I don't have time. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 19:55

But if you did have a pet would having the pet also influence your purchasing decisions?

Zhau Hui 20:02

Yeah, of course, because, while, currently I don't have a pet, but I'm already caring about animals while I'm buying any stuff. So if I do have one, I think I'll care more. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 20:12

Okay, great. Yeah, I think that's all the questions that I wanted to ask, is there anything else you would like to add? About your attitudes towards our experiences with luxury fashion products?

Zhau Hui 20:27

Oh, just I think people might, should really stop buying these leather goods, and also the luxury brands they really need to consider lower the price down because it just not worth it. Because I know the costs are very cheap. I know that.

Arjun Awasthi 20:47

Yeah. No, it's really interesting. I also was very curious to know because you mentioned the benefit of the human community. What do you mean by that?

Zhau Hui 20:56

I don't know. I just feel like whenever I see any animals that are in danger, I feel bad about it. I feel sad, because, well, it might look like it has nothing to do with me, because it's like animal and I'm a human, but I still I can, maybe it's because I like I'm really strong empathy person maybe that's why, but also, because when there's, I think there has been already a lot of species that have, I don't know the word but like, gone, that we couldn't see anymore. And I feel sad about it, because I feel like the Earth like humans are not the only living thing on Earth. Well, actually, before we are here, it was the it was the animals and they are also the owner of the planet so they should really should have been given space to live. I mean we have all these high toll buildings, and they barely have the forest, or the like the ocean that they used to live in and I feel like I feel really bad about it. Even though I don't I don't consider myself as the one who has made all these results because I care about planet. I close the tap whenever I use it, I turned off the lights. But I know, know, it was humans fault that they don't have any more living spaces. So yeah, I just feel bad. They're also part of our community.

Arjun Awasthi 22:35

And any other final thoughts? Have you missed saying anything that you want to say?

Zhau Hui 22:41

Not really, I think.

Arjun Awasthi 22:43

Okay, and so now I just show you these images. Okay, so these are all luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skin. So, if you can have a look at them, and I'm interested to get your impressions on each image.

Zhau Hui 23:07

this one's a bit boring, isn't it? Yeah, it's just like black. If you

Arjun Awasthi 23:11

could also say the image A or image B

Zhau Hui 23:13

Oh, image A. I can't tell what it is though. I just think the look it's boring so even like this one even is 100% human made leather. I wouldn't buy it. Yeah, cuz it's just boring. Image b, this one looks better, but I think it's more, I wouldn't buy it though because this watch looks a bit too big if it's human made I might considering buy one for my father. Oh, I don't even know there's like leather what's the word camera is it real leather?

Arjun Awasthi 24:00

Yeah, it's lizard skin.

Zhau Hui 24:01

What's the what's the point of using real animal skin on cameras? I don't get it. What brand is it? Okay, I can't tell I don't know this brand. I mean if it's human made probably I'll get one. Cuz it is a good looking camera. Oh, this one's super expensive. Me personally my my own opinion I never think Hermes looks good though. I don't think they have like good looking products. This doesn't fit my aesthetic. So yeah, even though it is human made. I wouldn't buy one. This is this is alligator though. I mean I look at this, and I immediately think about is made by geller alligator and then I think I feel pain, you know, even though it's not me when I think about alligator, so I'm definitely not getting one. I can't because I can still see that recording in my mind. Where their skins have been peeled off. It's also quite boring. I don't get it. I mean, the leather goods, they kind of just look the same and I don't know why I don't understand why people are so obsessed. See, these two are like exactly the same, just different color.

Arjun Awasthi 25:34

Why do you think it is that people are obsessed with them? If they're all so similar?

Zhau Hui 25:41

I think it's the price maybe. So for rich people, because they don't care how much it costs so they don't care how much it costs when they're buying it, because they can afford it. But they do care what they are wearing, it has to be expensive enough so that when they are having all of those on their own them, and when they are, for example, socializing like socializing with the people who's on the same level with them. They could sort of like a little bit bragging it. But not like saying it oh, I just purchased this because they know that the other people can tell what what season that product is and what, what how much it costs. So I think it's not really the look. It's just how price is that they care. And maybe this might be a little bit dark, but maybe they just enjoy knowing that these are made from real animal leathers but it's a bit dark, though to think about that. But maybe.

Arjun Awasthi 26:45

Do you have any other final impressions, or thoughts?

Zhau Hui 26:50

Not really because I'm just not going to buy any leather goods, even though when I can afford it.

26:56

Great. Thank you so much. That's the interview done.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Claudia

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

Yep, that's good. Okay, so, so you've read the participant information sheet and consent form. So do you have any questions for me before we begin?

Claudia 00:10

No, no, it's okay.

Arjun Awasthi 00:12

Okay. So basically, I'm going to ask you a series of questions.

Claudia 00:17

Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 00:17

It's a semi structured interview and that means that based on our conversation, I might ask other relevant questions. In the middle of asking these questions, I'll give you a definition of a term and then I'll ask you questions based on that. And finally, I'll show you a series of images to get your impression. Okay. Yes, great. So can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Claudia 00:42

Okay. Well, basically, I'm a student of MA fashion design, but I studied two masters degrees related with business and other with commercial management. Well, basically my BA it's about my field fashion design. Well, I am well, one of my hobbies is basically go to museums and also go to cinema or listen to music also see and research different trends, like fashion trends.

Arjun Awasthi 01:20

Okay, great. So what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Claudia 01:27

Yes. Well, basically, I tend to love luxury fashion, give us quality, or give us quality and also more innovative designs and also they work with, the luxury brands, work with a very high quality fabrics. So I think so this is a main reason that the majority of well, maybe [inaudible], or I don't know like different kinds of target buy this type of brand for the quality and also the type of product because if you compare, well, basically fast fashion like H&M, Primark, well, different brands, they give us only a garment. So it's only a garment, but they don't focus on the quality on the garment. They don't focus on the finishing, they don't focus on the trends. So it's only a simple garment.

Arjun Awasthi 02:23

Okay, and what kind of fashion products or accessories do you buy?

Claudia 02:29

Well, I used to buy, um, like bags, because I love bags, and also, T shirts and jackets. Because for me, it's essential that we need to have T shirts and also a jacket, like I know, it's a basic garment that we have in our room. So I'm also bad because I think so, loser brands have innovated, they basically they give us an innovative design, in the bag they normally put a lot of details and also they play with the lining and also play with the colors and add different textures. So for that I like to buy these type of products in luxury brand than commercial I don't know like fashion brand.

Arjun Awasthi 03:15

Right. So you mentioned the fast fashion brands. So how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products to you?

Claudia 03:25

Okay, well for me, I think so. It's important because I know if you have a lot of money obviously you can buy a luxury brand but if you are I don't know like you have a be a little kinda like a medium level you only can buy fast fashion brands. So maybe you love these type of products in a luxury brand but you don't have any possibilities to buy that. So I think so luxury brand is related with status and also is related with the behavior of the target because obviously the majority of their target prefer exclusivity and also a high quality and also they focus in the trends like fashion trends "what is the trend for 2024?" "what is the trend for 2025?" So I think so it depends on the status and also the type of person.

Arjun Awasthi 04:29

And what about brands is appealing to you then? What kind of brands?

Claudia 04:33

The name?

Arjun Awasthi 04:34

Yeah.

Claudia 04:34

Okay, good question. Okay I love, for example, I love TUMI, I love, oh which is luxury brand in my case, I'm also, I love well Chanel but for example in TUMI I prefer their bags and also, that, I like, I love, the quality of their T shirts, but in the case of Gucci obviously it is better, the bags, the hats, accessories because they focus and put a lot of details in this type of bags, compared to TUMI that only produce bags.

Arjun Awasthi 05:11

So this is TUMI right? T-U-M-I.

Claudia 05:14

Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 05:14

Okay. I was just confirming. Yeah. Great. And do you yourself tend to follow fashion trends? Why or why not?

Claudia 05:22

Yes, well, I am a fashion designer. So basically, I know, I know a lot about fashion trends. For example, I try to buy things that is related with the trends of 2024. Because this is our year. So, basically I tend to follow these type of trend, for example, I'll put on colourful, brilliant socks, or maybe I will use a bag with a different type of texture. So, it's a trend of 2024. So, basically, I also, I follow the philosophies around, because one of the trends of 2024 is basically, sustainability, and the majority of the brands give that, to well, the target audience, because now sustainability is a very important topic that all the brands must follow.

Arjun Awasthi 06:19

If you had the chance to obtain a luxury item, such as a handbag that was made from exotic skin, so that's crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard, would you consider owning it?

Claudia 06:32

No, in my case, no, because, okay, I buy, well, I'm part of the target of luxury brands, but I don't like the idea to consume this type of product, because the process of making this type of product reflects a lot of cruelty I think so animals deserve a very fair, and also without cruelty life, like us, like humans. When you buy these type of products, basically, you promote that consuming of this type of product, you promote the cruelty of animals. So I don't like this idea.

Arjun Awasthi 07:13

What if you were gifted it by somebody?

Claudia 07:17

Well, in this case, maybe, I don't know, I will donate to someone. Because, I don't like to be able to use a bag with the you know the skin of a crocodile or something like that, because I think so I'm a part of a target audience. And I think so we can stop this type of behavior. Because it is the responsibility, it is not only for fashion design, it's also the responsibility of the target audience. So if we buy more bag related with animal skins, obviously, we promote the suffering of animal.

Arjun Awasthi 07:56

And in case you were to inherit something like this?

Claudia 08:02

Well, in the past.

Arjun Awasthi 08:04

You have?

Claudia 08:04

In the past, no, but now I don't have.

Arjun Awasthi 08:06

But could you talk? Could you talk about your experience in the past? What changed for you then? Because since you had that product, and now you have a different opinion, so what was it that changed your mind?

Claudia 08:09

Yes, so basically, I used to have a crocodile wallet. I don't, I don't know, I don't know why I bought that. I think so it was because the quality because it is true that the majority of animal skin give us a high quality fabric and also looks more elegant than normal fabric. And I think so for these characteristics I decided to buy this product. But now, as a fashion designer, obviously, I have more empathy, I am more empathetic and also I am more sensible with this type of topic, because it's a controversial, a controversial topic. I think so I don't have the necessity to buy now these type of things I can avoid it. So with that, obviously, I can promote a good treatment for the animals because animals don't deserve that and animals have the same feelings as us they feel pain, they feel happiness, they feel fear, as the humans. I think so, well, because I wrote a lot about the process of making and I learned about how animals suffer for this type of process. Because it's not, it's not a simple process. Basically, it's a very, it's a very cruel process. So when I wrote these type of things, I noticed that I didn't like this this type of bag. Because it's not part of my behaviour, I don't like to promote cruelty to animals. So for that I decided to change and don't like these type of products.

Arjun Awasthi 10:12

That's very interesting, actually, because I find it fascinating that you made that transition. But I'm really interested to know when you were actually in possession of this crocodile skin wallet.

Claudia 10:26

Exactly?

Arjun Awasthi 10:27

Yeah.

Claudia 10:28

Four years ago, but wait no, more than six years ago, it was when I was studying fashion design, in my under degree. So after that, I wrote about different types of trends and also wrote different articles related with obviously hunting and killing animals. And basically, the fault is, basically, it is our fault it is the fault of the fashion industry. So, as a fashion designer, obviously I don't like the idea to allow that and promote this type of treatment. So I think so it's my responsibility to do something in order to obviously delay this kind of behavior.

Arjun Awasthi 11:12

So what did you consider appealing about this crocodile skin wallet when you had it?

Claudia 11:18

My feelings?

Arjun Awasthi 11:19

What was appealing about it?

Claudia 11:22

Ah, what. Well, that quality obviously, when you touch a, now it's bad, when you touch an animal's skin, you know, the fabric that was made with animal skin it's a different quality. It's, I don't know, how can I explain but basically, that texture feels more real and also it looks more elegant, it looks more fancy. And luxurious, compared to luxuriant fabrics without skins of animals, obviously. So I think so, this was the reason that I bought that. And also, normally, they add a lot of details and also in the fabric that is made with the skin of animals. So I think so these type of products, look more unique, looks more exclusive than simple or luxury fabrics. So I think so this was the main reason that motivated me to buy that.

Arjun Awasthi 12:29

Right. Thank you. Did you feel conflicted at that time when you were buying this?

Claudia 12:37

No. No, because basically, I didn't know about the process of making of this wallet. Okay, so the majority of the target, the majority of the audience buy things not for the process of making, only buy things because they love it. And they love the quality and they love the style, the details, but they don't worry about the background of these products. They don't worry about I don't know about the idea that maybe the designer need to kill two animals to do that. So don't matter that, only matter the quality and the visual image that transmits the product.

Arjun Awasthi 13:23

Very interesting. So how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products are sourced? I know you mentioned that you wrote a lot about this?

Claudia 13:33

Yes. It's a very cruel process. Because normally they well first off will hunt hunting, these animals hunt these animals and then they kill and then they cut them cut the skins of the animals and obviously separate them well the most important part of their skins. With that, basically, they convert this skin in a fabric obviously mixed with other threads of fabric so that they create a very big piece of fabric.

Arjun Awasthi 14:11

Are you aware of the wildlife trade? Do you know what it is?

Claudia 14:16

No.

Arjun Awasthi 14:16

Okay, so the illegal wildlife trade so the trade of animals?

Claudia 14:21

Okay,okay. Okay.

Arjun Awasthi 14:23

Do you know about this?

Claudia 14:24

A little bit, but not a lot. Basically, well, I know that some species are illegal to hunt and also kill. But for me it doesn't matter the species all of them are animals. So it doesn't matter if they are big, small, common or exotic. They are animals. So, I think so, also, the majority, well few designers love to do that, because when you kill I don't know like an exotic animal, maybe you can produce a better and high quality fabric compared to a common animal. So I know that it's illegal, but they love to do that, because with that they can produce a very unique product. So obviously, they can offer to their audience, an exclusive and unique product with the high quality and also a lot of detail. So, I think so for that they do that, in order to offer the exclusivity, in order to offer a different product than the common than the common brands. Because obviously, you can buy a bag with whatever product you want, so they need to add a value. And this value obviously, is that kind of diamonds.

Arjun Awasthi 15:52

Very interesting. So now I'm going to read you a definition. So, there is a term in psychology which is known as cognitive dissonance. So, it is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. So this discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. So basically, it means that sometimes we might have a particular value, but our behavior may be completely different to that value. So then how do we choose which one. It is basically like a conflict and then resolving that conflict. So did you experience this kind of discomfort when you bought your crocodile skin wallet? And if so, how did you eliminate that discomfort?

Claudia 16:45

Well, I think so my behaviour in the past was that I love the quality of this bag. But also I have like another side of me talking about what about the animals? What about the process of making this bag? What about the cruelty that reflects my bag? but by the end I think so, obviously it's more valuable our own behavior, than our emotions, I think so feelings for the target audience is only feelings but I think so the idea of having a very unique product obviously it's more so you put yourself to buy it

Arjun Awasthi 17:33

Eight. So basically, because you so on the one hand, you have these feelings, but on the other hand, the quality of the product and ...

Claudia 17:41

Also the status, obviously well for the majority the status is more valuable than feelings because this product gives you status and obviously all we have well the majority of persons need to have status because it's like I know it's an important thing that they must have. So without this without these

products, they cannot have a status. Obviously it is better to wear a skinned animal bag than a simple bag. It is different, your outfit looks different.

Arjun Awasthi 18:19

Very interesting. So did you feel the need to justify the purchase of this crocodile wallet to yourself or to others? If you justified it, how did you justify it?

Claudia 18:34

My justification was that it was good quality, and also deserved the price that I paid. And also [inaudible] that was a unique product, I think so that word unique is very common when you justify these type of products, because obviously not having them doesn't give you exclusivity, but this type of value gives you exclusivity and also I think so the majority of the audience uses this word. I need to buy this bag because it's unique, it's elegant. I can't, I know, I can't find this bag in another place. So I think it's unique, a common word to justify my purchase.

Arjun Awasthi 19:26

Have you faced any ethical concerns when buying certain products? And how are you able to overcome your moral dilemma?

Claudia 19:35

Well, like feelings?

Arjun Awasthi 19:39

Yeah, so if you've had, yeah, basically, yeah.

Claudia 19:43

In the beginning, I felt fear because it's crocodile it's a controversial product. In my case, I had an opinion but that other people maybe can could say something different. And also a, well, maybe they I don't know, maybe? Like, how can I explain that? Like, they, they disagree with my decision, they can, they could disagree with my decision. Because this topic is very controversial. And one side I know it's a target that loves this type of product, another side is the target that hates these type of products. And obviously in the past, I was part of a target that love this part of this type of product. So when I, when I wear when I just wear this type of product, the majority of people look at me in a strange way, in a strange, in a strange, in a weird way. And also, they asked me why I decided to buy this type of product, you know, that is obviously made with a skin of animals, why you don't promote, you know, promote fair environment for animal why you promote cruelty? So they asked you a lot of questions about your decision. So, but for you, for me, it was good, because I love it. So it's this simple reason. I love it. Yeah. So no matter what they say to me, I didn't change my opinion.

Arjun Awasthi 21:29

Then what kind of response would you give if you were asked these questions?

Claudia 21:33

Well, basically, I respond them that it was my decision. And also, I focus not in the process of making I focus in the quality of the product. So for that I decide to buy this product. So like maybe it's a cruel answer.

Arjun Awasthi 21:49

It's honest, and that's exactly what I wanted. Obviously, this is something you had purchased in the past, and it's not Yeah, in the present it sounds very cruel. It's okay. No judgement at all. This is all very fascinating. So do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? I know you had mentioned the cruelty aspect earlier.

Claudia 22:17

Another ethical concern maybe is maybe because when you're when you're hunting these animals and kill when you hunt and kill these animals, you reduce a part of their population. And I think so animals is important for our own environment it is part of the planet. So as humans it's the same thing. And I think so one ethical concern is that what happens if I kill? I don't know more than 500 animals for making a simple bag what what is the next step? What happened with our planet? What happened with the environment? I think so the majority of people don't can't answer this type of question. Because they only focus on that it doesn't matter we have more animals, we have more species, it's only one species. So but it's bad.

Arjun Awasthi 23:17

And does your attitudes towards animals affect how you buy products?

Claudia 23:23

Well, now in the actual, yes, actually, yes, well currently I, obviously, I don't want to buy these type of things, I don't like the idea to promote that. I don't want to be this part of targets. I want to be a different fashion designer. So I think so like I say, I'm a fashion designer. Um like fashion design, it's my responsibility to promote a good a good treatment for the animals. Animals deserve a life, animal deserve to obviously have a good environment for living. In my case, I basically I don't like the idea of it now I hate the idea to buy these type of things because it's not part of my philosophy. It's not part of my behavior. And also I prefer to buy, I know I can buy fashion, fashion, fast fashion brands in order to buy things that, things that don't relate with the skins of animals or something like that because I only need to buy a simple bag. I don't need to buy a bag that was made with the skin of animals and involve a lot of suffering in that soul.

Arjun Awasthi 24:42

Okay. And do you have any pets?

Claudia 24:46

Yes, in my country.

Arjun Awasthi 24:48

And does having a pet affect your purchasing decisions?

Claudia 24:53

Well, maybe yes. Because remember the time, yeah, when I loved him. Yeah. So I think so. Yes. because someone does kill my pet, and also make fabric make fabric with the skin of my pet is so cruelty is so cruel. So I think so now I love animals, I just love both, but I consumed this type of thing so it's ironic but now I love animals and I think so obviously when you have a pet you have you are, I know like you are a lover for animals, you you're feeling change because you have an animal in your house. So obviously you hate the idea to make a fabric with the skin of your pet and it's the same with the skin of other type of animal. So I think so you follow another type of philosophy. When you have pets, maybe you can understand the suffering you can understand why why it's incorrect to kill these type of animals in order to make fabrics. It's different when you don't have pets, I think so because when you have a pet you have a connection and also you understand the importance of animals in our own environment. So the pet is animal, the cat is an animal, obviously the crocodile is animal so basically, they are grouped they are they are in the same group. So they don't deserve to I feel like don't deserve to like kill someone with need to only for the reason that they need to produce fabric. So it's ridiculous and also it's a strange thing its a strange behaviour.

Arjun Awasthi 26:46

Would you say that there are different animals for different uses. So we have some animals that we get leather from some animals are pets

Claudia 26:54

Yeah

Arjun Awasthi 26:55

And then some animals we eat.

Claudia 26:57

So I'm I'm vegetarian.

Arjun Awasthi 27:00

Okay.

Claudia 27:01

So I don't eat animals. Only plants in my case. So yes, obviously well vegetarian people and also the people who meat well, who eat meat, obviously, I think so yes, we have different categories. I think it's bad we have we don't I think so animals but it's so cruel say that. I don't know if we need, we are allowed to eat animals, in my case I'm vegetarian. So it's very complicated to explain this type of decision.

Arjun Awasthi 27:01

No, but I'm very interested.

Claudia 27:23

But maybe the people eat animal because they feel that this is a reason this is a reason for animal exists in our world for for eating. And also they I think so they make fabric with animal because they think for that. For that is animal for to something for eating for making fabrics for I don't know for killing for hunting. So I think so they give a purpose for the exist for the life they give a purpose for for animals, but it's not it's not the real purpose I think so animals is like human like say they need to they deserve the same treat treatment as us but the majority of people eat animals because this is a reason that our they live in our own environment. They they killing because they killed them. Because basically they think that obviously they can do some things with the skin of the animal because for that they exist, basically. Yeah. Yeah. So if animals don't have any purpose in our environment, basically, they won't do that.

Arjun Awasthi 29:07

That makes sense. Yes. Okay, so is there anything else you would like to add about your attitudes towards or experiences with luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skin something that you haven't mentioned?

Claudia 29:24

No, I think so. Well, now, I think so my worry as a fashion designer is stop that obviously I know that this is a very complicated topic. It's very difficult to stop this type of behavior. Because in my case, I'm calm I'm sensible with this topic, but obviously the majority of fashion designers don't matter the topic don't don't worry about the topic, because only they worry in produce things and making things and making power [inaudible] things luxury things so I think so that we must we we can look in another options, sustainable options different fabrics maybe I know we can add a prints of skin skin animals in our fabric so we don't have the necessity to kill them so I think so we need to look into another options obviously a fair an ethical option for produce these type of things without cruelty.

Arjun Awasthi 30:39

So now I'm going to show you a series of images these are all luxury fashion products that are made from exotic skins.

Claudia 30:46

Crocodile?

Arjun Awasthi 30:47

Yeah, so they're all labeled as image A, image B etc. So if you could have a look at them and then give me your impressions as to what you

Claudia 30:58

The image?

Arjun Awasthi 30:59

Yeah. What do you think about it what does it make you feel?

Claudia 31:42

Okay okay. Well I this image refers to a cruel thing obviously

Arjun Awasthi 31:55

Which one?

Claudia 31:56

This is the most interesting image

Arjun Awasthi 31:58

The image D?

Claudia 31:59

Yes. Because if you notice that they put a legal description. I mean, these words, basically they try to convince combine, they try to basically say an exceptional made white well with crocodile diamond, and also, why 18 carats white gold and diamond hardware. So basically [inaudible] well basically they try to they try to associate the good quality of this type of skins, they try to associate the skin of the animals with good quality. So when the people enter to this well to this store, obviously, if they see that, they want to buy it, because say that this bag provide more quality than normal bag, say they use a section of, they use basically words like relate with luxury relate with exclusivity relate with, like status. Because if this product, I know like this, product maybe it's another if this image show another product, maybe they only put white bag with [inaudible] out with fake leather or something like that, but then they use a specific word a keyword in order to attract them in order to motivate them to buy these type of things. I think so this is the key of luxury brands use these key words in order to promote the purchase of this product.

Arjun Awasthi 33:47

Yes, and all the other images?

Claudia 33:49

Yes, so if we talk about this, I think so when the people use a skin animal, like a case, because basically it's like, it's like it's a type of case, so and also they try to hide, they try to hide the process of these skins, because when you notice it's only a little piece of fabric. So obviously, when you put a little piece of fabric that was made, or is a skin of animals, the the majority of the target don't focus in that only focus in the product only focusing in this beautiful camera, the high quality of the camera, I know the price of the camera, but they don't look into this type of details, because it's only a detail.

Arjun Awasthi 34:43

I see. And you don't think that this detail is what makes it attractive?

Claudia 34:49

It's attractive, but I think so it's a little piece of the skin of the skin of animals so they look more luxury obviously the camera look more elegant and look more fancy with this type of fabric. But I think so that the target ignore the idea that this fabric was made with animal skins. Because they only focus in the product. So the product basically is the camera.

Arjun Awasthi 35:23

Any other impressions?

Claudia 35:26

Well, in this case, Image E. I think so belts is the most common product that normally the majority of people buy for the price, obviously. And also, because it's not, it's not an exclusive product. In my country, I am from Peru, normally you can buy this type of leather belts, with the price of, I don't know, maybe a 20 pounds. It's a good quality. So in my country, buying these type of things, like leather belts, don't give us a status because it's a normal product it's a common product. And also, I guess the majority of people prefer to buy these type of things like belts with leather belts because looks obviously fancy when you put this belt on your pants and also a it's cheap compared to another product. If you compare with Hermes bag, obviously, it was much more expensive.

Arjun Awasthi 36:34

Yes, but this is a crocodile skin. Yes, yes. Yes, I know. I see the lines. Yes, it is I noticed that but at least the majority of people don't don't focus that this belt was made with crocodile skin because looks like normal leather. So they can't basically they can't notice the difference in normal leather and crocodile skins. I see.

Claudia 37:04

So it's very difficult. I know. I know what type of leather I think so this is lizard.this is lizard.

Arjun Awasthi 37:09

Yes.

Claudia 37:09

Yes, because I am fashion designer but for normal target, it's very complicated to different these type of things. So it's not usual that normal people can identify what type of the skin is so maybe they can maybe they can think okay, it's fake leather. Okay, it's leather, but they add texture in the leather so.

Arjun Awasthi 37:36

It's really fascinating because basically, based on your experience, what you're saying is that the target audience doesn't really notice the exotic skin, they're more interested in the final product.

Claudia 37:49

Yes, and also that the majority of target notice that okay, this product was made with leather but don't focus on what type of leather so because, for me, it's, it's very, it's very easy to define what type of skin is, but because I'm a fashion designer but for the normal target, okay, maybe I know, maybe they think okay, this is a normal leather, or maybe it's a cow leather, I know like a cow leather, I know like a sheep leather or something like that a cow leather. So, they can't understand that this belt was made with crocodile leather. So for that, they can change their behavior, because they they they can understand the issue, they can understand the problem the main problem of that. So, if you if you are not able to see all these type of characteristics in the products, obviously, you will promote the killing and hunting

of animals. But this this is not the fault of the target I think so is its our fault because basically we don't communicate the process of making. We only say like Hermes Hermes I don't know bag of crocodile skin but don't say what was the process for making this bag so, they are not transparent so I think so this is the problem because it's a little it's a big conflict and also the target audience obviously only they they buy it because they love it and they want it but if they know about the process of making if they know that they need to kill they well they kill two crocodiles and cut the skin in a very cruelty way obviously I think so they will change their behavior. And they won't buy that because they they know that process. I think so it's the fault of the majority of brands because they only communicate that key words. Only communicate a beautiful description of the bag no more. But whatever the process, I think so, you know the process, I know the process, but what about the others, they know the process? I don't think so.

Arjun Awasthi 40:14

It's really, really interesting to get your perspective. Because also, you know, to see when you started learning about the process, that's when your behavior also started to change.

Claudia 40:26

Yes, yes. But it's very complicated and the normal target with these type of articles because well, these articles is not that good or maybe it's very normally this type of articles transmit a very cruel process. It's not common that normal people okay, I would like to read. I know what what about the cruelty in animals in fashion industry? It's not common, obviously, it's a it's a type of hobby that the majority of designer have right, but it's not a common hobby for normal people. For example, my parents, they are doctors. Okay, they love animals, but my father would normally wear a belt. So a well his belt is not crocodile, but his belt is like cow leather. But I think so it's the same because they are animals. But they he don't know he doesn't he doesn't know the process of making this type of belt. And in my case, I try to obviously communicate trust me this type of process because it's my parents they are my parents, so it's more easy for me to understand well, it was for me communicate these type of things and also they understand what was the process making obviously they prefer to buy other things but it was because I'm her daughter. So in the case of others, maybe they don't have any fashion designer friends they can't talk with fashion designer because obviously it's very complicated. And also they don't feel motivated to read more about that and also the whole outcome. No this has been fantastic. Do you have any other final thoughts or impressions that you share? Well, this I think so it's very obvious that was mainly crocodile skin.

Arjun Awasthi 42:33

The image A.

Claudia 42:35

Yes it is very obvious, I think so for the normal target this is very obvious. Maybe they they want they want to see that but it's very obvious for the texture in the case of that if you notice the crocodile fabric transmit a different shine, a different texture compared with lizard because this is more like matte texture like soft texture and this is more shiny texture and maybe the majority of target prefer crocodile skin because in my opinion, if you compare the quality of the skins it's better crocodile than lizard and also give give you more quality for that the majority of luxury brands sell crocodile skins because the

crocodile is a particular animal that have different kinds of skins and also transmit the crocodile transmit different kinds of colours like like it's not brown it's not green. Also, there are crocodiles that have a particular skin compared to lizards. So for that and so this is a reason that the majority of of brands if we're focusing bag products they prefer to sell crocodile a well bag with crocodile skins than lizard skin for the quality of the skin. If you notice the if you compare this image it's the same skin but basically the difference is this is more shiny, this is more soft the quality. You can you can basically you need to add more texture because the crocodile skin have texture so I think this is that value that they want to transmit to their target that the crocodile skin is unique. So [inaudible] are different it's a contrast of colors so this thing this characteristic only provide for an animal for for the crocodile. Because it's very difficult to create this thing, without, with another fabric is very difficult because you have lines you have a contrast of color you have a lot of detail you have a shiny, a shiny like a shiny fabric. So for that I think so this brand prefer crocodile skin in bag because you compare the majority of accessories they can basically the brands prefer to do with okay lizard or maybe you know a soft crocodile skin or I know another kind another another type of skin but in the bag in it will focus on the bag I think so, the main value for the bag is that is that need to be or need to make with crocodile skin because provide more exclusivity provide more value more status and a unique product. If we look this image, well basically I think so in the accessory, it's very common this this type of a skin is crocodile?

Arjun Awasthi 45:52

Alligator.

Claudia 45:53

I know yes yes yes for the lines. Yes, yes, it's different. Yes. So basically I think so in accessory the majority of target don't matter what type of leather it is because accessory looks small, if we compare with the size of the bag. So you can't compare you it's impossible to compare the size of this bag with the size of [inaudible] so I know like in a clock is difficult to compare, because you only need to have a little piece of the skin for to that. So, I think so, because of that the target don't focus if this clock or this belt was made with the skin of animals because it's a little piece.

Arjun Awasthi 46:42

And but then they don't realize that it's a little piece. But then there are many little pieces. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And I guess the person who was going to buy this bag is not looking to hide it.

Claudia 46:47

Yes, exactly. They did a lot of pieces with the skin, well, with a very small piece of the skin of animals for produce this type of accessory. Yes, but they don't realize that because it's a small piece but when you see this type of thing, obviously this is a big accessory so obviously you become observed. It's impossible. So it's impossible to hide that. Yes. I think so they only don't focus in that. Focus in the quality, color, contrasts and no more.

Arjun Awasthi 47:28

No more.

Claudia 47:28

Yes. In the case of that they focus basically in the accessory, in the quality of the accessory, in the in the design of the accessory, because this piece of thing it's part of the clock, but it's a little it's a little piece. They focus on the design the complete design. So if they love it, obviously they want. They want to buy that. Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 47:51

Great, fantastic. All right. Well, thank you so much for your valuable opinions and insights. It's been really useful.

SPEAKERS

Arjun Awasthi, Liu Fang

Arjun Awasthi 00:00

Okay. All right. So thank you so much for joining me for this interview. So just a little bit about what I'm going to do. So I'll ask you a series of questions. It's a semi structured interview. So based on our conversation, I might ask you other questions as well. In the middle, I'll give you a definition of a term. And there'll be some questions based on that. And finally, I'll show you a series of images and ask you your impressions on that. Alright. So to begin, can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

Liu Fang 00:31

Okay, I am an international student I study at the winchester school of art. I do global media management. I am 23 years old, and well, I like listening to music, watching movies and thrifting. And yeah, this is my spare time.

Arjun Awasthi 00:56

Okay, great. So, what do you think about luxury fashion? Is it something that interests you?

Liu Fang 01:04

Yes, I fancy luxury products, like handbags, jewelry, shoes, perfumes and stuff. Well, recently I have been obsessed with handbags. Because I feel like I could use it in different situations. Well, so I have a lot of purses. And every one the you know, each of them are for, you know, special occasions. Well, though, I have, you know, I have technically a lot of handbags, but I still want I'm still looking for more of them, I feel like every handbag has different characteristics and they've they should be in different situations. So, yeah, so, I have so, I have different on let's say different satisfaction and needs for you know, different situations.

Arjun Awasthi 02:19

And how important is the brand reputation and status symbol associated with these products for you?

Liu Fang 02:28

Well, I think brand is important to me. Because if it has reputation it has a good reputation, where it is famous, it means that you know the value is is respectful. So, I want to pay for that pay for that reputation. It means that I you know the quality is good and also it could brings me like it could bring me like kind of like a social acceptance from from this brand. So, I think brand I will always consider the brand reputation. While, you know, shopping.

Arjun Awasthi 03:23

And you mentioned social acceptance. So what do you mean by social acceptance?

Liu Fang 03:28

For example, if I dress myself with luxury brands, and I think others would suppose that I am rich, I have a good social background, I am educated, I have a wealthy family. And I think it's, um, it contributes to who you are. So, and you could think, if you are, you could be recognized by these brands, and you could you know, you could make new friends you know, make friends who you like, you know, quickly I mean because some of my friends have a you know, have the same appetite for fashion as me. And they also and we also have a you know, have a similar let's say similar financial ability to buy these products. So therefore we could go shopping, right? If my friends she she is you know, she's relatively poor. She can't afford like Dior or Chanel that brands I think we will have well we will have different you know, shopping needs which is obvious besides, I think we will have different aesthetic on this, you know, on luxury products, because she makes a post that she kept just because these things are not affordable to her. So she don't care about what does the product do. Like? What does the product made of like, like stuff.

Arjun Awasthi 05:33

That's very interesting. And for yourself, do you tend to follow fashion trends?

Liu Fang 05:38

Yes, I'm so fond of like Gucci, YSL I don't know that, you know, that completes spelling. Anyway. Um, I like Gucci because I think it has an interesting, let's say, interesting collections, you know, in different seasons, they would release different patterns. And I am you know, it's this girl habit isn't it? that we all have a liking for, you know, beautiful fancy, you know, patterns. So we like to pay for it. But I also, you know, but I also look for some, let's say affordable brands, or I mean, they sell cost effective things like Uniqlo, Zara, H&M, I think they are, let's say fast fashion? I'm, I'm not sure definition anyway. But I think these brands, they all do good qualities and also the cost is sensible. So I think I, you know, in my, in my, let's say, expenses these brands would take up the majority. Um, however the, you know, the big brand like the luxury brand, I would just pay for it a little to satisfy my needs.

Arjun Awasthi 07:36

So, if you had the chance to buy or obtain a luxury item, such as a handbag, but it's made from exotic skin. So exotic skin means that it's made from crocodile, alligator, snake or lizard, would you consider owning it?

Liu Fang 07:49

I think I won't ignore it! I think it is a factor to you know, to make my decision. But I think what, what I care about is that how does the texture look like? How does the texture, so what's the speciality of the texture? Well, and also how about the cost? How about the price? I think using you know, animals skin is not a very environmentally friendly but honestly I have no idea why. What's the reason? I mean how it comes. However, I think if I have you know I have if I can pay for it? I think I would consider it. Yeah. Then

Arjun Awasthi 09:03

that's going to be my next question because you mentioned that the texture and how it looks like and the value so what do you consider appealing or attractive about these luxury fashion products like handbags that are made from exotic skins?

Liu Fang 09:19

I think well firstly I have to confess that I I have no idea which exact brand they always do deal with exotic skin but but I would say you're well using an exotic you know, animal skin is I think it is reasonable because because some customers they have needs for you know for for animal skin, handbags or, or purse like that. For me, I think I will. Sorry.

Arjun Awasthi 10:08

That's alright. Take your time. That's fine. Okay,

Liu Fang 10:11

I think what I'm going to say is that always using the same texture is not offensive thing. So, I will prefer the brand there the brand image like, or the brand ideas, why you use why you use? Very, you know, very costly and very not environmentally friendly, you know, texture to make your products and what's your idea? I think if this idea is not it's not very interesting or using this kind of skin. It's not. It's not a necessity. And, and then you use it. I think you it's ridiculous. And I think I won't pay for it. Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 11:08

No, that's fine. But you've mentioned that some customers have the needs for these kinds of skin. So what do you think it is about these products that are really appealing to those kind of customers? Like what kind of needs are being satisfied?

Liu Fang 11:26

I think only a luxury brand would do exotic skin products. I think the need is that showing you're rich and and you can afford, you know, you can afford like an animal skin handbags. Because it just looks fancy. Yes, I think the need is that, you know, make yourself attractive to other people, because you can afford that things that that is costly and only luxury brands would do these products. And you can buy it from, you know, from Zara or H&M these is, let's say, common brand.

Arjun Awasthi 12:17

Right. Have you ever bought product that's made of exotic skin? Or do you want something that has made an exotic skin? I think this handbag is made from leather. I'm not sure about it. I mean, it touched, like I think the reason why I buy it because it looks cute so and it fits my outfit. So I just take it. Yeah. And have you ever been gifted anything that's made of exotic skin?

Liu Fang 12:48

I'm not sure I think I have a cute purse, which is made of leather, because it looks like, but I'm not pretty sure. I am not that kind of person who really values the texture off, you know, what is it made from and I want to spend my time to look for the exact information. Because I think it's pointless. If you believe it, and it is, it is, so and I think because it looks like the true products looks like the real product. And I think other people feel like oh, it is made from animal skin and then it it would be very costly. It would be very expensive. Yeah, I think that kind of judgment or feelings from others is enough is adequate.

Arjun Awasthi 14:04

Have you ever felt a conflict when buying luxury fashion items sourced from exotic animals?

Liu Fang 14:11

Sorry say that again.

Arjun Awasthi 14:12

Have you ever felt conflicted when you're buying sort of the handbags or luxury fashion products that are made from animal skin?

Liu Fang 14:20

So what kinds of conflict?

Arjun Awasthi 14:22

So do you feel you know, like I shouldn't buy it or have you had any reasons why you don't feel like buying it but then you buy it anyway?

Liu Fang 14:34

Yeah, it happens. I think I would just think about the needs and the situation. Because I always you know, take a handbag and look in the mirror and and then I would imagine that which kind of situation I will have this bag and this is it necessary. for me for for the exact situation. I think if the answer was no, I think I won't pay for it. Yeah. Because this is not a necessity. And and I maybe have a lot of alternatives for that handbag. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 15:18

Okay. Yeah. So how do you think the exotic skins used to make these products are sourced?

Liu Fang 15:26

I think it will become, you know, important. That's the inspiration for artists, for designers, to, you know, to make their products I think it's more common for a luxury brand to do with that. Just like I said before, and some rich person, people, they have a fancy for exotic skin, luxury products. So, I think designers will consider their needs and to, to make this to make collections.

Arjun Awasthi 16:15

Yeah, so that's really interesting about the inspiration that the designers get. What I'm trying to ask is, are you aware of how the exotic skins the raw material, how it's manufactured? Or is it sourced? Where it comes from?

Liu Fang 16:33

Oh, come from, it comes from animals. Yeah. I think let's say animal will be killed to make to, you know, to to be taken of their skin. Well, I think, I think so, because I well, honestly, I haven't Googled for that. So just about, it's just a guess.

Arjun Awasthi 17:03

But okay. Do you know anything about the wild life trade? If so, what do you know?

Liu Fang 17:11

I have no idea. No ideas about the trade. But I think it's very bloody. It's very cruel. I feel like well, I suddenly feel like human always control, try to control animals. And I feel like animals are very, you know, very pity to be killed just for you know, for someone's ideas of a fashion things. This is cruel.

Arjun Awasthi 17:58

Okay, so now I'm going to read your definition. And if you have any questions about understanding the definition, feel free to ask me and then I'll ask some questions based on that. So in psychology, there is this concept known as cognitive dissonance. Cognitive Dissonance is a state of mental discomfort that arises when a person holds two conflicting beliefs, ideas or behaviors. This discomfort motivates the person to pick one and suppress the other to achieve psychological consistency. Alright, that's clear? So do you experience this kind of discomfort when you buy such products? If so, how do you eliminate the discomfort.

Liu Fang 18:50

Well, I think it does work on me? So, I can imagine, I, let me recall the experience I buy this handbag. Because it is I think the brand is from London. And there's also a London you know, a London you know, character under the brand. So, so I think someday when I go back to my country, China, I think my suit my, you know, my friends will would envy me to have this handbag because it is made from London. And some of them, I bet most of them haven't been to London, so let alone buy a handbag from London. So I feel like they would, they would envy me and this kind of being envied would make me feel make me feel good and make me feel like make me feel happy. Yeah.

Arjun Awasthi 20:04

So when you're buying the product itself, do you experience any discomfort?

Liu Fang 20:11

Discomfort? Yes, I think the price is not very sensible. But I still pay for it because because in my, in my feeling that well, I think the judged experience goes like, though it is costly, but I only buy one, right? Because it's the first time and I only pay for it once. So I think it's okay. Because the total is, is acceptable, it's affordable, right? Because there won't be a second time. I hope so. But I'm not sure when it will happen. So I think this is my, you know, psychological experience. It does make me uncomfortable, you know, to think twice. However, you know, I ended up buying this product, and I think, the happiness over weighs, you know, the discomfort.

Arjun Awasthi 21:17

Okay. If you could buy, inherit or be gifted fashion products that are made from exotic skin would you feel the need to justify your purchase of these products to yourself or to others? How would you justify it? Have you ever justified it?

Liu Fang 21:38

What do you mean, justify?

Arjun Awasthi 21:39

How would you explain it to somebody in the sense that, so I have this product that is made from exotic skin. How would you explain to somebody why you have it?

Liu Fang 21:53

And it is gifted? Right?

Arjun Awasthi 21:55

Gifted, bought, yeah, whatever. Would you feel the need to justify it first of all?

Liu Fang 22:05

Well, so let's consider two situations. The first one is, if I, I was in, you know, I was I was with friends who can pay for the, you know, that kind of luxury products, I think I will explain with explain, give some explanation with humor, or maybe wisdom, sarcasm on myself that I think always, it's just gifted, I won't, I will never pay for it because I think, you know, I am not rich, and I don't need that. I would just get make it as a joke to you, you know, for, you know, for the gifted situation. Because I don't want to show how rich I was, because I am not. So I would like to make fun of myself, you know, to explain that. Well, so, the truth is, I don't feel comfortable about this gift. And I think it is a wring idea to have this product with a friend who can pay for it. I think it's it's not fair to them to you know, let's say, I think if I bring those products with them, I think just like maybe I want to let them envy my financial situation. However, I think I think they would, they may judge me and may complain that why I always ,why I do that? So I think it's not fair to them to you know, to have this luxury brands with someone who can't pay for it. Well, for this situation, if I if I have this handbag, you know, this fancy product with someone who can pay for it I think it's okay, there's not any unfairness or fairness to them, because they haven't paid for it and they will totally understand why I why I have this product because it is normal to them to you know to have this luxury exotic skin products. So I won't give any explanations of where it comes from, where it comes from. Whether it is gifted or not, because it is pointless to give that explanation.

Arjun Awasthi 24:59

Yeah. Have you faced an ethical concern when buying certain products? How are you able to overcome this ethical moral dilemma?

Liu Fang 25:17

Well I would say, please let me do it once, I would just pay for it once, so I think once is okay, right? Once could be could be forgiven. So I think I would pay for it once and I would promise myself this is only this is the only chance I own it. But but honestly, I think I would have it twice, I would have the second, the third one. Because once you get one, and you will feel that pressure, and it would motivate you to keep buying the same thing. And, and you always do the same promise to yourself. So just like a vicious cycle. Well, and like you said, the ethical dilemma, I think it definitely happened on me because I would imagine because I know it is made from exotic skin and I could even touch touch the skin, I could even feel like it. So I can imagine what does the animal looks like and when it when it when I be with them. Last time, I go to the, do you, I would feel about it. So I think it makes me, it makes it tough to make the final decision. So I think this is the dilemma. Yeah, so. So, I'm not sure, if you if you give me the products, and if you show me right now, I think I have no idea what will, what I will, make this

decision on whether I would take it or I would consume, I would convince myself or I would just give up. I would just ignore the product. I'm not sure.

Arjun Awasthi 27:29

Okay, great. So do you believe there are ethical concerns then associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why or why not?

Liu Fang 27:45

Sorry, say that again.

Arjun Awasthi 27:46

No, that's okay. Do you believe there are ethical concerns associated with using exotic animal skins in fashion? Why or why not?

Liu Fang 27:56

I think there will be. I think it would be a key, key, let's say factors to key factor to designers who would make this make a new collection. I think we're all human being right. So we will always, and most of us have, well, most of us have pets. So I think most of us would think about the animals feelings. Though it's just like an imagination because we can't talk with animals we can't know exactly what they're thinking about. But I think that's a sympathy, I think we can feel that the animal is killed or the animal is hurt by, you know by by someone. I think that situation is cruel and I can even imagine that if the animal and every animal have had their family, right? I think I can imagine how does that, let's say like a children, a children crocodile is killed. And how does the mother crocodile think about that? I think it would be very painful for mother animal. And I think that kind of painfulness is the same as human being well that kind of sympathy makes us to think about the ethical problem. Well during the design during the production

Arjun Awasthi 29:58

You actually mentioned pets I was going to ask that question. So if you have pets, does having a pet companion influence your purchasing decisions? If so, in what way?

Liu Fang 30:11

Do you mean that if I have a pet? How do I consider it?

Arjun Awasthi 30:15

So if you have a pet, does that have any effect on how you buy products? Or does it have an effect on how you are purchasing luxury fashion products?

Liu Fang 30:25

Oh, oh, well, the thing is, I haven't had a pet because I am afraid of dogs or, you know, giant animal. I think it's giant to me, anyway. But recently, I have a liking for dogs. I think they're cute, even though I just, I just froze, some videos on my phone. I think they're, they're so cute. So I can imagine that if I had a dog, I don't know, I think I won't pay for the exotic skin products. Because I will think about my pet. I think I think I would be very guilty to my pet because I hurt their friends, I think, because in my

perspective, human being is, is it's a community, different from the animal community so, so where my pet comes from. So I think if I buy some exotic skin products, I feel like I just let's say, I abandoned my dog, I just keep away from my pets. I just want to satisfy my needs. And I forget and I forget, how does they part of the animal? How does they treat me so well? How? I mean, how well they treat me and how kindly they were. I feel like that kind of, you know, the desire, your aspiration to buy a fancy product is pointless and it's, it's ridiculous, and it's criticized it should be criticized. Yeah. So I think that kind of guilty, but, but pleasure, guilty pleasure, it's it's motivated by or by a desire from well, which is, you know, which is special and unique of a human being.

Arjun Awasthi 32:36

Yeah, so I guess would you say How do your feelings then towards animals influence your purchasing decisions?

Liu Fang 32:44

I think though, I feel like I don't live, I mean, a human being it's another community to, to, you know, to animals. But sometimes I feel like I feel like we're distant from each other. Maybe, maybe, if, if I had a dog, I think our relationship is not always bond. I think it's normal. And it does happen, you know, a relationship like friendship, or, you know, or romance I think it's common. So sometimes if I feel like if I feel like I am distant from the animal, I think the decision of buying exotic skin stuff would be easy, because I I just ignore, you know, the, ignore the, you know, the factor of how would they feel like. What's the picture of being killed by human? So just like I said, it's about the, you know, the relationship of animals, sometimes it could be close, however, other times it would be very distant. So, I think so just like a mood and it has ups and downs. So sometimes you would, you would convince yourself to buy it. I think that kind of dilemma is it's not very obvious, however, the rest of the time you feel like it's guilty. And you shouldn't pay for that pleasure, guilty pleasure.

Arjun Awasthi 35:09

Okay. Is there anything else that you'd like to add about your attitudes towards? Or experiences with luxury fashion products made from exotic skins?

Liu Fang 35:21

Well, I think I am not a customer who will always buy luxury exotic skin products, because I am not that rich. However, I believe there will be someone who who is rich who is too rich too to buy this product without thinking twice. Honestly, I I can't, I look down to them because I felt like they were very cruel. Always just, they're always want to satisfy their own desire. And they don't think about how this animal think. how does the animal think about? I think it's interesting because all what I'm saying, but because all this saying, is based on my imagination. Maybe there's no one who always buy exotic skin products. But But I think sometimes if I if I find someone who always have exotic skin products with them, I I would say I would suppose that they are a loyal customer of exotic skin products. So I would look down on them. So I think it is a kind of, like prejudice on people what their, you know, with their accessories. Maybe it's not true, but you always judged them based on your own imagination. Basically, I'm trying to understand so you're saying it depends on how many and how frequently the person is buying. Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 37:29

That's where the judgment comes from.

Liu Fang 37:31

Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 37:32

So if it's somebody who is buying it once, that's okay, in a sense, but if they're continuing to buy it, if it's a habit, then that's a problem.

Liu Fang 37:41

Yes.

Arjun Awasthi 37:42

All right. So now I'm going to show you a few images. So take your time to look at them. And then you can give me your impressions, your initial impressions, and your thoughts about these images. And when you're talking about them, I've labeled them so it's image A, B, C, D, E etc. So you can talk about them by using the label.

Liu Fang 39:08

Should I start consecutively.

Arjun Awasthi 39:11

However you would like to start

Liu Fang 39:18

I think image A and image D are all bags. They're the same kind of products. Well, and this is also what I've seen frequently in my life. And I'm and I feel like they're cute but but they are but I think this design is very it's very it's very, let's say bland, very, very vanilla. Yeah. So I can't imagine why it's so expensive for for a handbag. And I can't imagine that once, If someone buy image A or image D, if they pay for, if they pay a large amount of money on it, and what kinds of stuff would be put in the bag? Right? So, so how much is is like, a hand mirror in the, in the bag? How much is a bottle of water in the bag? How much is the phone in the bag? I think, I think it's quite luxurious, to you know, to have that kind of life. And I know that some celebrities, though they're rich, their top rich, like I don't know what their names, but I know that even though they are they have they are wealthy, but they never pay for this luxury products. And they always take economic, you know, class, you know, a flight. So I think that kind of life is what I'm looking for. Because they have abilities to pay for it. But they don't do it. Because they feel like maybe because of environmental issues so they don't pay for it. I think they're very, let's say very what's the word they are very respectful. I think their ideas is very unique. Yeah. I think image B and image E, they have a similarities of the belt. They're all belt. I think if I have money, if I had, if I had abilities to pay for this, I think I won't pay for it. Because it looks it looks smaller compared to image A an image the it didn't. I think if I want to show my financial abilities, I won't buy image E and image B because they're there looks small, smaller than you know, then a handbag. Oh, let's say they are the same price. Yeah, like this, they look smaller, and it looks tiny. So but I think it is good product to give someone because I suppose they are relatively cheaper than the handbag. Because let's say just

looking from the appearance. Image ie an image B would definitely use less exotic skin compared with image a and image D. So the price would be lower right? Would be cheaper I think well A, B, D and E. I think they're all accessories which means they are not necessity right and they will have loads of alternatives. I think it is not very practical to have that kind of exotic skin products. And and I know start considering of the of the quality and I have no idea how you know how long would they be, you know be be good to be used? I don't know their their life. I think if you buy these products you would pay extra money to protect them. Right? And just because they are there high let's say high what's it what's it called? You would spend it almost every day if you are a worker it is not very but because you know it is expensive so you may take more care of them which means you your concentration is not on your life, you you pay a lot of attention on these products. No, I think it is not a good thing for me. I prefer well focus on things well motivate me instead of a product, I think they are, well let's say they are away from spirits of a person. So what I mean that they won't live with you, right? Someday they will be for you, whatever you were, whatever, however your ideas and your feeling of the day is is the most important thing. So I think if you buy it, if you got it, it would take your time and energy to spend on it because you because you know it's not it is not too cheap to you know, to consume it so you would take extra care of them. Therefore you're you're filling in your. let's say, your ideas will be taken from these things. Which means you would have you will spend less time on your work on your on the relationship on your relationship or your family like so.

Arjun Awasthi 44:08

But I'm curious to know because you had mentioned earlier that these kind of products, they are sort of someone's identity. So, you know so people buy these products because you know because they look nice or they're fancy or they represent their identity.

Liu Fang 47:35

If someone is a loyal customer on these things, let's say, we which is a just that they these things are affordable to them so it becomes a kind of identity to them. But I still feel like they would spend extra time on these things because it is an identity right? And and you I think you want like to always have the same things in your life. Just because it is an identity and you will always spend extra time to look for something new because you want to have new you know you you want to live this fashion the trend just because you feel like you're a fashion iconic of its products. So you will still pay extra time on picking these things. I think image C honestly I haven't seen I haven't thought about a camera it's made of exotic skin. I feel like it is pointless. So the function is so I think the most important the most the most let's say the most important element of a digital camera is to its the lens right. So you should pay for the lens. However it was made from exotic skin. You would pay extra money for the you know for the texture of you know for just the appearance of this. I think it's not cost effective. I think I would like to to spend money on the exotic skin to to a better lens of camera. Yeah, this is my let's say shopping attitude perspective.

Arjun Awasthi 50:05

Okay great yeah that's all I needed so thank you very much.

Liu Fang 50:09

You're welcome

Arjun Awasthi 50:10

Yeah