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Balancing exclusivity and inclusivity through the strategic domestication of the luxury retail experience

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ABSTRACT

The mass-marketization of the luxury field results in a conundrum for brands: how to sell to the new mass of luxury consumers while continuing to conform to expectations of a singular, exclusive, and elitist experience. In contrast with prior research, which primarily focuses on understanding how luxury brands maintain their exclusivity despite market pressures toward “mass-marketization”, we draw on the institutional logics framework to explore how luxury mobilizes domestic elements in the service encounter to manage inclusivity and exclusivity imperatives in a context of massification. We show that the strategic mobilization of the domestic logic and its articulation with the market logic enable luxury brands to balance these contradictory imperatives. We identify three strategies that brands deploy in their retail stores: disguise (camouflaging the market logic under layers of domesticity), hybridization (blending domestic and market logics), and juxtaposition (partitioning domestic and market logics). Our findings suggest that domesticity can be mobilized both as an integration and a separation mechanism and that the “domestication” of the luxury retail experience enables brands to situate their customers at different levels of the consumption experience. Building on these findings, we give brands and operational managers working in luxury firms several avenues for improving the way they manage customer experience and service encounters.

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1. Introduction

The luxury industry has been booming for more than two decades: the personal luxury goods market reached €353 billion in value in 2022, and [Bain & Company \(2022\)](#) estimates market growth to reach €540 to 580 billion by 2030. The luxury industry is also facing novel forms of interactions with consumers ([Czellar et al., 2020](#)), prompted by the digitalization of markets with the rapid growth of the secondhand market ([Turunen et al., 2020](#)), e-commerce ([Kim & Kim, 2020](#)), the “liquidification” of luxury ([Bardhi et al., 2020](#)), and, more generally, the recent booming of social media, all of which contribute to the democratization of luxury brands.

This rapid and massive expansion is desirable profit-wise but it also creates a significant challenge for luxury brands, in that volume dilutes the brand exclusivity and rarity on which luxury legitimacy is based ([Dion & Arnould, 2011](#); [Kapferer, 2014](#)). Although a few studies have emphasized the importance of finding the right balance between expanding to less afflu-

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ent market segments and preserving luxury status in the eyes of their core clientele, the question of how luxury brands manage the tension between exclusivity and mass-marketization remains under-studied in marketing literature. Researchers investigating how luxury brands respond to the rapid changes and growth of the luxury industry, which directly challenges the status game (Bellezza, 2023), have mostly focused on understanding how luxury brands are able to maintain and protect their status in this rapidly expanding market, such as through the artification of the luxury experience or the signaling of brands' status (e.g., Bellezza, 2023; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Dion & Borraz, 2017; Joy et al., 2014).

Our study offers a complementary perspective on the question of how luxury brands address this tension and navigate the contradictory imperatives of inclusivity and exclusivity, or in other words, of selling to both the “happy few” and the “happy many” (Kapferer & Laurent, 2016). Rather than focusing on the strategies luxury brands deploy to defend their social standing as high-status, “exclusive” brands, despite the inevitable mass-marketization of the field, we explore luxury brands' attempts at balancing and satisfying both imperatives, thus providing further insights into how these brands respond to the challenges they are currently confronting.

Our approach builds on recent managerial and theoretical insights that show that, although luxury brands strategically exploit their close connections with the artistic world, the luxury experience is also strongly tied to the domestic world. The notion of domesticity refers etymologically to the state of being at home under the same roof (Rey, 1995). “Domesticity has to do with family, intimacy, and a devotion to the home as well as a sense of the house as embodying—not only harboring these sentiments” (Rybczynski, 1986, p. 75). The emergence of the term is intrinsically linked to the ability to clearly distinguish between public and private spaces (Rybczynski, 1986).

Several luxury brands have opened stores designed to cater to clients in places mimicking domestic spaces, i.e. spaces more akin to apartments or houses than a shop (e.g., Casa Cucinelli by Brunello Cucinelli, Residence by Harrods, AP house by Audemars Piguet). Emergent research on luxury retail also provides hints of home-like cues in luxury stores (Debenedetti, 2021) and shows the importance of intimate and personal service interactions in the construction of a positive customer experience (Welté et al., 2022a).

Following these recent insights, we explore how luxury brands strategically draw on domesticity to address the conundrum they are confronting and ask the following research question: how do luxury brands mobilize domestic elements in the service encounter to manage inclusivity and exclusivity imperatives in a context of massification?

We address this question through the theoretical framework of institutional logics (e.g., Dunn & Jones, 2010; Friedland & Alford, 1991). This approach is well suited to explore the luxury conundrum as it recognizes the existence of “conflicting and overlapping pressures stemming from multiple logics”, which creates “interpretive and strategic ambiguity” for organizational actors (Lounsbury & Boxenbaum, 2013, p.4). This approach thus enables us to investigate how actors (i.e. luxury brands) embedded in settings in which multiple and sometimes competing or conflicting imperatives coexist (i.e., selling more while remaining exclusive) can make sense of these tensions and develop strategies to respond to institutional complexity. Our empirical investigation relies on interviews of operational managers (retail managers, sales associates, and retail architects) and observations in luxury stores.

We uncover three different strategies in which luxury brands combine the domestic and market logics: disguise (i.e., camouflaging the market logic under layers of domesticity), hybridization (i.e., blending the two logics), and juxtaposition (i.e., partitioning the domestic and market logics). We suggest that these three strategic combinations participate in the construction of a “domesticized” retail experience (Debenedetti, Oppewal & Arsel, 2014). This domestication, which we define as the process of imbuing market elements, actions, and practices with domestic meanings, enables luxury brands to manage the tension between inclusivity (i.e., facilitating access to the luxury field) and exclusivity (i.e., preserving the elitist dimension of luxury) imperatives given the plasticity and richness of the domestic logic.

Our findings contribute to research on strategic brand management and retailing by (1) enriching emerging research on domesticity in luxury retail and providing insights into how brands can strategically mobilize it to address market challenges, (2) showing how the domestication of the luxury retail experience enables brands to balance inclusivity and exclusivity imperatives by including the growing number of luxury customers within the luxury encounter through graduated situatedness, and (3) highlighting the potential of the institutional logics approach to further our understanding of the consumer–brand relationship. Our findings also provide managers working in luxury firms with several avenues through which to improve the way they manage the customer experience and service encounters.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. The inclusivity/exclusivity conundrum of luxury brands

Luxury is now an actively growing sector, featuring corporate giants and targeting an expanding clientele (Kapferer, 2014). Luxury firms increasingly engage in practices similar to those observed on the mass market, with high launch and advertising costs, heavy investment in social media, an ever-growing number of new products, shorter product life spans, and the need for short-term financial results (Chailan, 2018). The resulting challenge, or conundrum, for luxury brands is to balance the massification of the luxury market, and thus the inclusion of new categories of customers, while conforming to expectations associated with luxury (Dion & Arnould, 2011)—that is, expectations of the singularity, exclusivity, and symbolic power of their offerings (Berger & Heath, 2007; Hagtvedt & Patrick, 2009; Kapferer, 2014).

Previous studies investigating this challenge have primarily examined the strategies luxury brands deploy to distance themselves from “ordinary” mass-market brands and re-assert their high-status symbolic power. Some works have focused on the management of customers’ status, exploring for instance how to maintain the brand as a status marker that consumers can manipulate to signal their position in the social game (e.g., [Bellezza, 2023](#)). Other works in this stream have also assessed how luxury brands craft experiences that help consumers enact high-status positions: through the material and social cues of the servicescape, brands make consumers behave as class subjects who have specific understanding of their position in the social hierarchy ([Dion & Borraz, 2017](#)).

Another stream of research has investigated how luxury brands legitimize their status as luxury brands—that is, non-ordinary brands whose price and symbolic power are undisputed (for a review, see [Joy, 2022](#)). These studies have shown how luxury brands draw connections to the art world—which values creativity, imagination, and aesthetic and artistic sensibility—and investigated the artification of luxury (i.e., the process of transforming luxury into art). For example, [Dion and Arnould \(2011\)](#) demonstrate that luxury brands draw on art to build brand legitimacy and diffuse aesthetic ideologies. They present the artistic director as an artist emphasizing his or her creativity, detailing his or her inspiration, showing his or her connections with art (e.g., collaboration with artists, passion for art), installing artworks in stores and organizing exhibits in art museums. [Joy et al. \(2014\)](#) show that stores are becoming hybrid institutions, embodying elements of art galleries and museums. Weaving artistic-related cues into brands’ retail spaces aims to make brands’ singularity tangible and to impart a vision of beauty on which a distinctive positioning can be built. This strategy seems to increase luxury products’ attractiveness as consumers perceive products as more luxurious, less risk-inducing, and more purchasable when presented in a museological format ([Logkizidou et al., 2019](#)). By drawing close connections with the art world, luxury brands can build on the aesthetic dimensions that shape the goods’ singularity and uniqueness and thus justify their high price ([Dion & Arnould, 2011](#)).

These research streams have provided important insights into luxury brands’ attempts to *distance* themselves from “ordinary” mass-market brands. They have devoted scarcer attention, however, to investigating luxury brands’ strategies to *balance* or *transcend* the contradictory imperatives associated with the mass-marketization of luxury. Therefore, little is known about luxury brands’ attempts to articulate the historically exclusive logic of luxury with the newly faced more inclusive logic of mass-marketization.

We propose to further investigate how luxury brands manage this inclusivity / exclusivity conundrum by drawing from recent managerial insights emphasizing the key role of domesticity. In its 2018 report, for example, [Bain & Company](#) explains that luxury brands will need to transform stores into places where customers feel at home, delivering distinctive customer experiences and engaging in authentic and distinct relationships with customers.

Many luxury brands have already implemented this transformation of luxury retail spaces. A pioneer in this field, Ralph Lauren has arranged for decades his stores to epitomize “the interior of an East-Cost American model family: a couch covered with a tartan plaid, photo frames on the chimney, bookshelf and candles”, and the opening of flagship stores in ancient buildings that “people might otherwise never have had access to” (Le [Figaro, 2023](#)). More recently, several luxury brands have opened stores designed to cater to clients in a space more akin to a penthouse apartment than a shop. Boucheron, on its website, explains that its flagship in Paris is “designed like a family home, this private townhouse now invites its prestigious clients into an apartment where they feel right at home.”¹ Similarly, Audemars Piguet opened a collection of AP Houses that resemble private clubs or salons rather than retail spaces. There is no shop front or window display, just a discreet brass plate at the entrance to the premises. Visitors are encouraged to relax, reflect, connect, or disconnect while discovering Audemars Piguet’s universe through a variety of events. There is also a kitchen on site in which a professional team prepares canapés or even full dinners for regular clients. “We wanted to create a sense of comfort, intimacy and belonging for our family of customers,” said Audemars Piguet’s resident historian.²

Recent research on luxury retailing has also acknowledged the transformation of luxury retail servicescapes into “homey” spaces. Several works have emphasized the crucial role of commercial friendship in luxury service encounters and explored the importance of informality, conviviality, and intimacy between luxury salespeople and regular customers ([Welté et al., 2022a, 2022b](#)). Other works have examined home-like socio-material cues in the servicescape. [Debenedetti \(2021\)](#), for example, shows how homeliness is staged in luxury stores. His research uncovers how luxury retail stores mimic authentic and idealized private residences through an intimate and exclusive atmosphere and personalized social interactions. His work and other previous research, however, have tended to overlook both the strategic potential of domesticity in luxury and the processes underlying the construction of a domesticated space, an oversight that is problematic because prior research has shown that feeling at home in retail spaces has positive implications for brands, such as ultimate loyalty ([Rosenbaum, 2006](#)), that is, an intense and extreme form of loyalty towards the place that may turn customers into its supporters, defenders, and ambassadors ([Debenedetti et al., 2014](#)).

We thus aim to further our understanding of the role of domesticity in the management of service encounters and, in particular of its strategic role, in two different ways: by looking at the processes underlying the domestication of the luxury retail experience, focusing not only on material elements but also on social and temporal ones; and by uncovering managers’ and salespersons’ perceptions and insights on these processes. Because physical stores play an important role in conveying

¹ https://www.boucheron.com/fr_fr/la-maison/26-vendome.

² <https://www.wallpaper.com/w-bespoke/audemars-piguet-ap-house-london>.

the meanings of luxury brands (Debenedetti, 2021; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Joy et al., 2014), we expect the confrontation between the two opposite imperatives of, on the one hand, selling more and, on the other hand, preserving the singular, exclusive, and elitist essence of luxury to be particularly salient in retail spaces. We thus set out to explore how luxury brands strategically mobilize domesticity in their retail stores to manage the inclusivity/exclusivity conundrum in a context of massification. To address this research question, we draw on the theoretical framework of institutional logics (Friedland & Alford, 1991).

2.2. Institutional logics

Institutional theory is increasingly gaining traction in marketing research investigating the relationships between market actors and the multifaceted contexts in which they are embedded. Building on the idea that markets are “arenas of social interactions in which economic exchanges are embedded in and shaped by complex social dynamics” (Philippe et al., 2022, p. 334) and in which actors can manage, shape, and negotiate their social standing (Baker et al., 2019), marketing researchers have begun conceptualizing marketplaces as institutional fields (e.g., Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Humphreys, 2010; Welté et al., 2022b).

As one of the cornerstones of institutional theory (Zietsma et al., 2017), the concept of institutional field designates a bounded “local social order” (Fligstein 2001, p. 107) or a community of actors (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983) who share meanings and understandings (Glynn & Abzug, 2002) and are governed by a set of institutions and orienting principles referred to as “institutional logics.” Institutional logics are the “set of material practices and symbolic constructions” (Friedland & Alford, 1991, p. 248) that shape actors’ behaviors, identities, cognitions, and vocabularies within fields (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Friedland & Alford, 1991; Thornton, 2002). They are “socially shared, deeply held assumptions and values that form a framework for reasoning, provide criteria for legitimacy, and help organize time and space” (Dunn & Jones 2010, p. 114). Different logics trigger different sets of values, objectives, and perspectives (Thornton et al., 2012). Important for our study, logics constitute “situated forms of organizing” (Thornton & Ocasio 2008, p. 100) that “provide resources on which actors draw to develop practices and shape identities” (Mutch, 2018, p. 242).

Institutionalists have extensively investigated the dynamics underlying institutional logics, showing in particular that multiple logics can coexist within a single field, sometimes compatible (e.g., Dunn & Jones, 2010) and sometimes competing against each other (e.g., Besharov & Smith, 2014; Reay & Hinings, 2009). The concept of institutional logics was originally developed by Alford and Friedland (1985) to explain the contradictory practices and beliefs of three competing institutional orders underlying modern Western institutions (i.e., capitalism, state bureaucracy, and political democracy).

Institutionalists also emphasize actors’ agency in challenging dominant logics or proposing new ones (e.g., Misangyi et al., 2008; Nigam & Ocasio, 2010), altering logics (e.g., Haveman & Rao, 1997), or combining them together to form new logics (e.g., Busco et al., 2017) or create new market opportunities (Dalpiaz et al., 2016). More generally, prior research emphasizes how institutional logics constitute resources that actors can mobilize for strategic purposes (e.g., Durand et al., 2013), including gaining acceptance from their audiences (e.g., Bitektine & Song, 2023). If logics affect attitudes and actions (Lounsbury, 2007; Thornton et al., 2012), they can also be altered by actors’ practices (Smets et al., 2012), and research “has described multiple ways in which organizations rearrange their material elements to address beliefs and expectations” (Dalpiaz et al., 2016, p. 348). For example, Dalpiaz et al.’s (2016) exploration of Alessi’s efforts to combine the logics of industrial manufacturing and cultural production uncovered different patterns that were implemented sequentially: first, the compartmentalized addition of new guiding norms borrowed from the field of cultural production to produce new lines of products that were kept separate from the traditional ones; then, the enrichment of existing principles with new compatible elements from the field of cultural production but still with a focus on functionality; finally, the reinterpretation of elements from both logics that were synthesized to produce a hybrid logic that favored the design of products simultaneously embodying functional and art-based features. This gradual combination of the two logics led the household goods manufacturer to introduce significant alterations in its practices in areas such as manufacturing, sales and marketing, product development, and categorization (e.g., enhancing product functionality with more aesthetic features, targeting new consumer segments, hiring prominent architects or designers to consult on product development, organizing exhibitions about Alessi and re-editing iconic objects).

Institutional logics also have a profound impact on legitimacy judgments; that is, how logics are mobilized by actors and activated in audiences’ minds can determine how audiences perceive these actors (Bitektine & Song, 2023). For instance, Alessi’s mobilization of the cultural production logics enabled the manufacturer to gain cultural recognition, as evidenced by the acquisition of some of its products by museums around the world (e.g., the 9090 coffee maker by MoMA in New York) or the earning of acclaim and awards by recognized design institutions (Dalpiaz et al., 2016).

Several works in marketing research have recently mobilized the institutional logics framework to investigate the development and transformation of markets and practices and how consumers make sense of them (e.g., Dolbec et al., 2022a, 2022b; Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Grant et al., 2023; Welté et al., 2022b; Zanette & Scaraboto, 2019). In particular, these works have investigated how organizational actors manage the institutional complexity stemming from facing the “incompatible prescriptions and competing demands” (Dolbec et al., 2022a, p.50) of co-existing institutional logics. For instance, Dolbec et al. (2022b) explore how religious education institutions responded to the introduction of the market logic in the Brazilian education field and document the ‘nested coupling’ strategy these institutions developed in order to accommodate the competing demands of the market and religious logics. Ertimur and Coskuner-

Balli (2015) examine how organizational actors deal with the multiple logics of the yoga field (i.e., care, medical, fitness, spirituality, commercial). They find that some yoga brands follow a 'populist coupling' of logics and incorporate elements from several field logics within the commercial logic, while other brands prefer to stay away from the commercial logic and combine elements from a smaller set of logics through 'exclusive coupling'. Dolbec et al. (2022a) explore how the coffee market's evolution since the early 2000s was shaped by the interplay between the commercial and craft logics, which affected firms' market positioning (i.e., craft or commercial orientation), their practices (e.g., the development and professionalization of the baristas, the development of sophisticated latte art) and ultimately enriched the market meaning system (e.g., the development of a craft-based vocabulary).

Although these recent works have enriched our understanding of the strategies that organizational actors develop to negotiate institutional complexity (e.g., when a new logic emerges and restructures a market or when multiple logics coexist in a given field), they have primarily focused on exploring agency directed at managing conflicts between logics. Less attention has been vested in uncovering how actors can strategically mobilize and leverage a logic *external to a field* in order to address challenges that pertain to another logic. In our study, we thus investigate how luxury brands mobilize the domestic logic as a strategic resource to manage the contradictory imperatives inherent in the market logic in the luxury institutional field and the extent to which such mobilization helps brands propose different levels of experience through the service encounter.

3. Methods

Our investigation takes inspiration from the ethnographic methodologies used in works analyzing the meanings of luxury encounters, such as commercial friendships (Welté et al., 2022a) or status games (Dion & Borraz, 2017). Since we do not study consumers' experiences and perceptions, but the way luxury brands manage retail experiences, the most appropriate approach was to base our empirical study on in stores observations and expert interviews (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Doing so has enabled us to gain direct access to material arrangements, conversations, behaviors, and interactions of people within the particular context we study.

Our research field is luxury retail in Paris. The project started as an observation of luxury stores aimed at uncovering materiality and meanings in retail but evolved when we started to identify the recurrent presence of domestic cues. We began our data collection with participant observations in 90 luxury stores in Paris (see Table 1). Although circumscribing

Table 1

List of stores and locations in Paris in which we conducted our observations.

Brand	Stores visited	Brand	Stores visited
Alaïa	Moussy	IWC	Paix
Alexander McQueen	Saint Honoré	Jacquemus	Montaigne
Antik Batik	Minimes	Jimmy Choo	Saint Honoré
Armani	Montaigne, Saint Honoré	Kith	George V
Baccarat	États-Unis	L'Eclaireur	Héroid
Balenciaga	Saint Honoré	Loewe	Saint Honoré
Balmain	Saint Honoré	Louboutin	Jean-Jacques Rousseau
Berluti	Sèvres	Louis Vuitton	Champs Elysées, Montaigne, Paix, Saint Germain des Prés, Vendôme
Bonpoint	Montaigne, Tournon	Mikimoto	Vendôme
Boucheron	Vendôme	Moynat	Saint Honoré
Breitling	Paix	Nina Ricci	Montaigne
Bücherer	Capucines	Officine Universelle Buly	Marais, Bonaparte
Bulgari	George V, Vendôme	Omega	Champs Elysées, Saint Honoré
Cartier	Champs Elysées, Montaigne, Paix	Patek Philippe	Vendôme
Céline	Saints Pères	Prada	Montaigne, Saints Pères
Chanel	Cambon, Francs Bourgeois, Montaigne, Vendôme	Ralph Lauren	Madeleine, Montaigne, Saint Germain
Chloé	Montaigne, Saint Honoré	Rolux	Le Bon Marché*
Chopard	Saint Honoré	Saint Laurent	Montaigne, Saint Sulpice, Saints Pères
Christoffe	Paix, Printemps*	Schiaparelli	Vendôme
Coach	Saint Honoré	Shang Xia	Sèvres
Dinh Van	Montaigne	Sonia Rykiel	Saint Germain
Dior	Champs Elysées, Montaigne, Bon Marché*	Tag Heuer	Champs Elysées
Dries Van Noten	Quai Malaquais	Tiffany & Co	Champs Elysées, Paix, Printemps*
Ferragamo	Grenelle, Montaigne	Tom Ford	Saint Honoré
Givenchy	Sèvres	USM	Bourgogne
Goyard	Saint Honoré, Saint Honoré	Vacheron Constantin	Paix
Gucci	Champs Elysées, Archives	Valentino	Saint Honoré
Hermès	Saint Honoré, George V, Sèvres	Van Cleef & Arpels	Vendôme
Hublot	Vendôme	Weston	Francs Bourgeois
Inès de la Fressange	Grenelle		

* Department store.

our study to one city might limit the generalizability of our findings, it makes it easier to develop in-depth analyses within a single cultural context. In addition, the Parisian context offers a particularly relevant and representative context in which to study how luxury brands manage their retail service encounters because Paris is considered the cradle of fashion and luxury and is currently one of the most important locations in terms of number of luxury stores. Finally, this study draws on extensive field work and we made sure to build a comprehensive picture of the luxury retailing landscape by including in our store sample stores of different sizes (e.g., local stores, large flagships), in different sectors (e.g., fashion, accessories, watchmaking, jewelry, tableware), and different neighborhoods (Borghini et al., 2021; Debenedetti, 2021; Dion & Arnould, 2011; Dion & Borraz, 2017). We visited the selected stores at different times of the day and week, with a preference for times when stores were not crowded to favor interactions with the staff and not interfere with their work. The length of each visit (between 10 and 90 min for a single visit) depended on the size of the store, the complexity of its organization and layout, and the interactions with staff. We visited some of the stores several times when appropriate.

To ensure a variety of viewpoints and facilitate triangulation, we undertook overt and covert observations (Roulet et al., 2017). The overt mode (which represented most of our observations) involved proactively introducing ourselves to salespeople as experts interested in high-end retail while the covert mode involved playing the role of a passive customer, strolling through the store and interacting with the salespersons only if prompted to do so (sometimes there was no interaction). Covert observation ensured that salespersons' natural behavior was not influenced or inhibited (Roulet et al., 2017) and was used to generate informal data and research notes (Vinten, 1994). Following these authors' recommendations, and in conformity with the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, we only used data retrieved through informal interactions (whether overt or covert) with salespersons as background information. We did not use it to generate detailed formal quotes, which we restricted to formal interviews. We did not collect personal data during our covert observations and there were no adverse implications for the places or people we observed. Using both forms of observation enabled us to collect a rich and diversified corpus of discourses and was useful to identify whether salespeople spontaneously alluded to domesticity. As observers had different levels of expertise in luxury, this also ensured a variety of viewpoints and offered "a means to balance differing perspectives, combining intimacy with local settings and the potential for distancing" (Langley et al., 2013, p. 6).

We carried out systematic observations using the following observational grid: description of the substantive staging of the point of sale (e.g., location, street frontage, presence of doormen, design, materials used, decorative elements, furniture, music), evaluation of the point of sale (inductive appreciation of the overall atmosphere and meaning of the store), and the impressions made by the socio-materiality of the place (Dion & Arnould, 2011). In other words, our unit of observation was the store, in all its dimensions. We took field notes following each visit and included personal diaries, structured notes, and photos (Borghini et al., 2021). We orally asked permission to the stores' managers or salespersons before taking pictures and only photographed stores' material elements. Although not the initial focus of our observations, we uncovered recurrent material or sociomaterial cues that hinted at a domestic atmosphere. We thus decided to investigate these domestic meanings and how they were articulated with the market dimensions of the store in our subsequent observations, as well as in our set of interviews.

In the second stage of our data collection, which temporally overlapped with the first data collection, the research team conducted 15 interviews with luxury retail managers, store personnel, and retail designers, recruited through acquaintances or alumni network or following interactions during fieldwork. Consistent with this purposeful sampling strategy (Guest et al., 2006), we recruited a diversity of informants in terms of their managerial expertise and product categories (e.g., fashion, leather, jewelry, perfume) (see Table 2). Before being interviewed, informants were informed about data privacy and confidentiality. In conformity to the European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity, we ensured anonymization by using pseudonyms and disclosing information about informants' sector rather than their firm/brand. As a consequence, our dataset cannot be used to identify individual persons. The interviews were recorded with a mobile device as all informants had given

Table 2
Expert interviews.

Pseudonym	Position	Sector	Duration (min)
Bastien	Retail designer	Watches & jewelry	70
Bruno	Sales manager	Watches	80
Charles	Visual merchandiser	Fashion & accessories	75
Daniel	Retail designer	Perfume & cosmetics	50
Fabrizio	Communication Manager	Fashion & accessories	60
Georges	Retail designer	Fashion & accessories	50
Jean-Marc	Store manager	Leather	49
Julien	Retail manager	Watches	159
John	Retail manager	Fashion & accessories	45
Marc	Retail manager	Fashion & accessories	80
Mara	Store manager	Fashion & accessories	41
Marianne	Sales associate	Fashion	40
Nelly	Store manager	Fashion & accessories	80
Paulo	Retail manager	Fashion & accessories	58
Simon	Retail designer	Perfume & cosmetics	40

their informed consent. The interviews lasted between 40 and 80 min, began with the informants' backgrounds, and then extended to the ways the brands for which they worked, were operationalized in retail contexts. We asked informants specifically about the characteristics of their brands' customer experience, the role ascribed to design/materiality/sales personnel in the experience, the overall atmosphere of the store, and the subsequent relationship between consumers and the brand/place. The topics discussed during the interviews were broader than domesticity but as most respondents evoked domesticity or domesticity-related topics spontaneously, we delved deeper into them. In the rare cases when respondents did not evoke them directly, we asked more pointed questions. All 15 interviews and ethnographic field notes were conducted and written in French, then transcribed and coded. In accordance with the data minimization principle, we only analyzed the data that was directly relevant to our research object. All the data we collected is stored on the personal computers of two of the co-authors and no-one, other than members of the research team, has access to it. As the nature and modalities of the collected data differed (e.g., interviews, field notes, photos), we used meaning units as our units of analysis, that is, items that "relate to the same central meanings" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004, p. 106). We employed constant comparison to extract emic themes from our data (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Thematic analysis via constant comparison involves the identification of key concepts and native categories in the data (open coding) and then the development of domain-specific metaphors and other semantic relationships through a combination of inductive and deductive thinking (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This approach is apt for gaining insight into little-understood phenomena, in this case domesticity in luxury stores (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

More precisely, we began our analysis by identifying domestic and market cues within our corpus, with no preexisting code. The raw data we started to analyze thus consisted in myriad details about architectural elements, layouts, visual merchandising devices, social interactions and salesperson behaviors, temporalities either directly expressed by informants (interviews or in-store on-the-spot interactions) or indirectly observed in our field notes, and photos. We first categorized these elements into three emerging categories according to whether they referred to the materiality (e.g., presence of a coffee table surrounded by armchairs), sociality (e.g., offering of refreshments to visitors), or temporality (e.g., a salesperson staying a long time with a visitor) of the place. We then looked at these elements within their context (i.e., the store): whether they predominated in the retail space, whether they were hidden, or combined to other elements, whether they were present in some parts of the store but not in others. Finally, we constructed a set of material, social, and temporal practices that we interpreted in terms of processes or mechanisms implemented by luxury brands. Given our theoretical lens, we paid particular attention to the mechanisms luxury brands deployed to articulate the domestic and market logics in their retail spaces.

4. Findings

It's the idea of welcoming in our house [as one would] receive at home, so we are in a relationship that is not transactional but relational. "I receive you": for the Swiss, it is very strong because, in Switzerland, it is not easy to receive people at home. You must know each other very well... It's rare to be received at home. It's a sign. It shows that we have become close, intimate... Here, we receive friends at home. The first important element was the table. A table is a matter of sharing. It says, "You are my friend." The second idea is to be perceived as a host: "I am your host. You're not here to buy a watch. We are here to talk about our common passion, about everything we like and we're not here to make a transaction..." Afterwards, depending on who you are, you are introduced in the antechamber or not. How far we go in the house, this is the question. (Julien, Watch brand, marketing manager)

This preliminary quote illustrates two major findings of our study. First, it suggests that the domestic logic penetrates the retail environment and that luxury brands aim to create a domestic experience for their consumers. Second, as evidenced in the last two sentences, it highlights that the mobilization of the domestic logic through the retail service encounter enables luxury brands to embed consumers differently in the experience. As we will discuss in further details in this section, domesticity is, paradoxically, leveraged to offer inclusive and exclusive experiences. For instance, Bruno, sales manager for a watch brand, explains that the stores' decoration "must appeal to everyone" and that "the spirit of the brand today is to be inclusive and not exclusive", while a salesperson for a couture brand mentions that the brand elected to manage "exclusivity" and "customer intimacy" through the use of a single homey store and a series of pop-up stores.

Most of the managers we interviewed perceived the domestication of the service encounters as a strategic way to build a strong brand positioning. Some explicitly mentioned how domesticity is a « tendency » to follow (Georges, retail manager, fashion & accessories brand), a « concept built by the top management », with a « strategic intention » (Fabrizio, communication manager, fashion & accessories brand) or a concept implemented according to « a brief » (Bastien, retail designer, watches & jewelry brand). Daniel (retail designer, perfume & cosmetics brand) explains:

[Brand name anonymized] has a new business model launched 2 or 3 years ago (...) we open more and more stores vs. corners in department stores. The goal was to differentiate our perfumes from those of Jo Malone or Dyprique (...) We call our new business model 'la Maison [brand name anonymized]'. We are inspired by the Parisian flat, with codes such as Versailles parquet flooring and mouldings (...) We wanted to create a Parisian flat as you can see in [art and architecture] magazines such as AD, something quite modern, I mean not too heavy or rustic, something that really look like a Parisian flat. (...) The initial briefing we got and that we try to perpetuate through its different evolutions, is to keep the atmosphere of a Parisian flat.

Some managers also alluded to domesticity as a way to genuinely improve the consumers' experience by dedramatizing and desacralizing it:

Now, it is important to be homey, home sweet home is a must, but with a modern aspect (...) Wood is warm, but with concrete to make a contrast. Let's say, to make it more relaxed. For younger people, less scary. Once there were loads of materials and textures (...) well, it was too much, it was overflowing with texture and luxury... and that can be frightening for an average person. In the 90s and 2000s, when I was studying design, we didn't dare go into a luxury store. They were inaccessible places. Today I think it is much cooler. (Daniel, retail designer, perfume & cosmetics brand)

At-homeness is a strong tendency in the luxury sector. It makes customers more comfortable and relaxed during a sale process. (Georges, retail manager, fashion & accessories brand)

Several managers also evoked the role of the crafting of a domestic atmosphere in making the luxury experience more accessible to a larger clientele, which increasingly comprises consumers occasionally gratifying themselves with formerly inaccessible gifts (Chandon et al., 2016). Bastien, for instance, sees domesticity as a « cross cultural language » that can be understood by many. He explains:

The idea was to open to an international clientele with codes that make sense everywhere. So, we opted for a home, a French home spirit, that we consider interesting to exploit. (Bastien, retail designer, watches & jewelry brand)

Focusing on the domestication of the consumer experience in retail environments, our study uncovers different ways luxury brands articulate the domestic and market logics in their stores to manage and navigate the tension between the two contradictory market imperatives they face: being more inclusive while offering exclusive experiences. In particular, it shows how brands can mobilize a non-market logic (domesticity) to solve tensions in the market logic and situate customers differently within the luxury experience.

To do so, luxury brands build on an idealized representation of the 19th century French 'bourgeois' domesticity staged at the material and the socio-temporal levels of the luxury encounter. In their stores, luxury brands make domesticity a construction that resonates with the notion of "*maison de luxe*" (luxury house), which conveys strong domestic undertones. Luxury stores are staged like "dream home[s]" (Debenedetti, 2021, p.308) in which furniture and objects primarily allude to opulent and wealthy bourgeois interiors. In our empirical setting, this idealized bourgeois domesticity is primarily anchored in the Haussmannian Parisian architecture and design. When describing their stores, informants often refer to an « *hôtel particulier* (typical Parisian mansion) with herringbone oak parquet flooring » (salesperson, jewelry brand), a « Parisian flat » (Bastien), or an « Haussmannian flat » (Daniel), i.e., a property built at the end of the 19th century in privileged neighborhoods of Paris.

We identified three strategic combinations of the two logics: *disguise*, *hybridization*, and *juxtaposition*. Each strategic combination rests on specific mechanisms, nurtured by a set of practices that are implemented at the material and socio-temporal levels and are aligned with the idealized representation of bourgeois domesticity. Though conceptually different (and presented separately for the sake of clarity), these combinations are not mutually exclusive and are often jointly mobilized in single stores. We find that the deployment of these strategies allows luxury brands to navigate the conundrum they face in different ways: by making what was a traditionally exclusive experience more inclusive, that is, more accessible to a larger base of customers while maintaining or recreating pockets of exclusivity for selected customers.

4.1. Disguise

That's how [the brand] does it, but I don't know how the other wellness centers do it. Some prefer to have a very... clinical side. You come in and take off your shoes like in a thalasso. We prefer to have the care side, the home side... That's why it's called Maison and not a wellness center. [The brand's founder] didn't want the word wellness center, so it's not written anywhere. (Simon, retail designer, perfume and cosmetics)

As this quote about a perfume and cosmetics brand's wellness center illustrates, luxury brands engage in *disguising* practices. Here, market cues, such as the term 'wellness center' that evokes a market establishment, are strategically camouflaged or silenced under an upper-class domestic veneer.

4.1.1. Disguising through material cues

Securing intimacy and privacy is at the heart of domesticity (e.g., McCracken, 1989; Rybczynski, 1986). Except in specific touristic areas, where they are highly conspicuous, the luxury stores we observed do not necessarily try to be visible. Beyond being "better integrated within the local urban landscape than mass-market commercial environments, because they are located in private mansions or outstanding Haussmann-style buildings" (Debenedetti, 2021, p. 307), some stores do not have signs or shop windows (see Picture 1) and are sometimes located on upper floors. The following excerpt describes our visit to the L'Eclaireur concept store:

Beyond being off the beaten track, the store is located in a private mansion (or a former part of one). It is almost invisible. I have an appointment at 10 a.m. with the manager and I am early. I check that I have not made a mistake with the address. I ring anyway. No one is there. There is no sign, the door is closed, and there is only a high and poorly lit window in which a few products are displayed. There is just this intercom and you have to use it to enter. The difference with other luxury stores is that the window is so high that you can't see inside the store at all. (field notes)



Picture 1. Camouflaging the entrances to L'Eclaireur (left) and Schiaparelli's boutique (right).

These two photos illustrate that luxury brands materially camouflage the market dimension of their presence within the urban landscape, though to different degrees. Located outside luxury stores' traditional neighborhoods, L'Eclaireur's entrance presents no sign or logo, only one elevated window. It is similar in all respects to traditional entrances to high-end residential buildings in Paris. The Schiaparelli's store (situated on Place Vendôme, home to the finest luxury stores in Paris), though displaying the brand's name on the entrance canopy, has no window, only a corridor visible from the outside through the glazed door. These two stores, along with many luxury stores, also keep their front doors closed, as in private dwellings. In some stores, consumers need to ring the doorbell to enter. For example, at Dries Van Noten, we observed:

The brand name is almost hidden on the plain front, which helps to erase the commercial aspect of the store. The element that struck me most comes when we show up at the door: I am invited to ring the bell for someone to come and open the door for me. It is at this moment that the rupture between the exterior and interior environment is created, giving the impression of waiting in front of a friend's house for him or her to come and let me in. (field notes)

This design evokes an idealized traditional mansion or upper-class residential setting, where guests are welcomed and announced to the host. Some stores are even located on upper floors, as experienced at Schiaparelli:

The entrance to the building is protected by a rounded awning with the brand's name on it. Seeing several people ringing the bell, I approached and rang the bell myself. It was a real intercom, and I had to select the name "Schiaparelli" from the drop-down menu. Someone came to open the door. I hadn't realized that there was a small reception desk at the back of the entrance (the corridor was rather dark). In fact, the other people who rang the bell were announcing themselves to other occupants of the building. (field notes)

The domestic ritual created by the absence of a doorstep is central in the domestication of the service encounter, all the more that the store is located in the former apartment of Elsa Schiaparelli, the brand founder.

Luxury brands also camouflage conspicuous market cues inside the store: all market-oriented material devices typically displayed in stores (e.g., cash registers, price tags, packaging, racks, computer screens) are invisible. Sometimes, they are hidden behind (or under) more aesthetic elements; at other times, some of these market cues are replaced by elements imbued with domestic meanings. For example, at Ralph Lauren's Saint-Germain-des-Prés store, traditional stately cupboards replace racks of clothing. Daniel further explained that "too market-oriented advertising displays" are avoided. Similarly, Marc, store manager at a leather brand, described the devices used to hide retail cues:

You see the bag over there? Well, there are screens hidden underneath and a keyboard. You know, as this screen is not aesthetically pleasing and it is not used a lot, we decided to cover it with this piece of leather... We want to hide everything that is about logistics, all the computer screens. ... Well, everything that is not beautiful. So, we hide screens. We also use these rolls of leather when we want to present a bag. For example, if a customer asks us to show a bag, we unroll a leather roll in front of her and put the bag on it (Marc, retail manager, fashion & accessories).

Brands hide not only retail cues but also the products themselves. At Schiaparelli, for example, we observed:

The most surprising thing about this visit is that there were no products present in the store, and it is a large one! (I was told by the communication manager) it was due to the fashion shows and temporary loans of pieces. On my previous visit, if there were ready-to-wear pieces and a few accessories, they were cleverly scattered throughout the rooms and literally blended in with the decor, along with other non-commercial items. Also, what finally struck me was that the place kept its meaning even when the products were totally absent. Sofas, knick-knacks, flowers, furniture fill the successive rooms and dress them up, like reception rooms in a dream flat. (field notes)

4.1.2. Disguising through socio-temporal cues

In addition to camouflaging material market cues, salespeople engage in silencing the market logic through the narratives they weave to consumers and tend to embed their social interactions in the domestic logic. For example, in many cases, salespeople begin their narrative not with information on the product but with anecdotes about the history of the brand or its founder. The inscription of a luxury brand's storytelling into the brand heritage facilitates an extended domestic interaction between the visitor and the sales personnel, as we observed during our first visit to Schiaparelli, as the following field note illustrates:

Very quickly, someone came to tell me that my guide would be arriving at any moment, but that in the meantime, she was going to tell me the story of Elsa Schiaparelli and the brand. When the person in charge of the tour arrived, a few minutes later, she took up the thread of the story told by her colleague, building in particular on the objects displayed in the apartment (notably paintings and posters), emphasizing the link between the designer and the art world (in particular Dali). The visit lasted more than 20 min, and the person in charge (I was the only person present in the place) explained to me that each customer starts with a visit of the house, a "historical tour," including many details and anecdotes. Even before talking about the product. (field notes)

This lack of emphasis on products and deviance from a typical market logic is possible because of the unique temporality of luxury service encounters. Luxury brands favor deceleration, and time to purchasing decisions is stretched. At a jewelry brand, the salesperson reported that she only has four to five clients per day, which means sales personnel have a great deal of time to spend with each customer. So, she takes the time to sit down with her clients, drink a coffee, and chat with them, for up to two hours, offering them interactions embedded in socio-temporalities that are very different from those encountered in mass-market commercial interactions. This domestic-like stretch of time is evident in the long selling ceremony or information sharing we observed, during which many details about the story of the brand, the brand's owner, or its current artistic director are overlaid while the product itself is downplayed.

Luxury brands reinforce their inscription in a domestic logic through home-like practices emphasizing the 'savoir-vivre' (good manners and etiquette) of the brand that complements their brand narratives. As Georges explained:

In luxury houses, customers get a service ... a coffee, a drink. Someone will come and take their jackets to make them feel comfortable... There is really a "customer experience" in the sense that we receive them in a space, we receive them as if they were at home, we serve them drinks, there are even toilets especially for customers. (George, retail manager, fashion & accessories brand)

These rituals to celebrate and build or reinforce the relationship with the brand, though primarily reserved for customers during or after a purchase, can also take place when a visitor is taking information about a product. We experienced it at Balenciaga Montaigne, where we were offered water, champagne, and a kind invitation to visit the temporary exhibition after an extended interaction with a sales assistant. As Bruno concluded, the perfect experience is when a customer says, "Damn! Did I pay you?" which for him expresses a successful transportation outside the market realm.

In addition, instead of using market-based terms such as "brand," "client," and "store," salespeople use French words that evoke the imagery of small stores with close and friendly relationships—*maison* (house), *ami* (friend), *famille* (family), and *atelier* (workshop) rather than brand, client, and factory—to evoke the idealized figure of the craftsman and the imagery of heritage and tradition (Eichinger et al., 2021). The vocabulary used by the salespersons anchors luxury stores in an institutional logic in which market semantics are replaced by domestic ones. Many informants evoked the idea of at-homeness directly or indirectly. Some explained that the concept underlying their stores' design is that customers feel welcome in their store as if it were a home. For example, a salesperson at a jewelry brand described the brand's remodeled boutique on Place Vendôme as "a mansion where customers feel at home". She emphasized how the store's design used to be sober and formal but is now "warmer" and that loyal customers are treated as "friends of the house". Jean-Marc (retail managers, leather & accessories brand) also claimed that what they want is "for customers to feel very comfortable in a warm place with people who listen to them and do their utmost to meet their needs" and that even if visitors do not buy anything, they want them to think that they had "a good time" and that they were "well received". Others described their boutique as a place where guests feel at home, as evidenced in the following verbatim:

And so it's true that the idea of moving towards a homely feel, that of a French house, seemed an interesting one to exploit. (...) What I like to do is that every time we open a boutique, we ask the sales assistants to discreetly ask customers during the first week about their feelings, to give an adjective or explain their feelings. And it's true that the same words [home/at home] come up every time, whether in Japan, Moscow, Cannes, or Monaco. So that's pretty reassuring, it means that the concept is pretty well understood (Bastien, retail designer, watches & jewelry brand).

Bastien's report on these customers' feelings is echoed in our own observations, as attested in the following field notes taken during our visit at Balmain:

This floor has a more intimate, hidden atmosphere. To access the two rooms, you must pass under low arches, giving the impression of entering 'caves'. But this atmosphere is made possible by the furniture in the centre of the two rooms. There are armchairs and a sofa, giving the impression of entering a home. It makes the rooms feel cosy. This is accentuated by the presence of a wooden floor. (fieldnotes)



Picture 2. Mixing market and domestic cues in Sonia Rykiel (left) and Hermès (right) stores.

In-store narratives, in which the term “brand” is purposely replaced by *house*, emphasize central elements of the domestic logic: care, kindness, intimacy, and loyalty. By alluding to a place’s architecture as a mansion, for instance, it reinforces the perception of a brand addressing a limited clientele, which is essential for important clients who might want to benefit from an exclusive experience and feel part of the brand’s close-knit circle. This discourse can be used with all customers visiting the store, however, to immerse them in its upper-class domestic atmosphere.

Because they are systematic and emphasized, these domestic rituals aim to make patrons or customers forget they are in a store and make them “feel as a friend” of the brand. By disguising the market logic (i.e., by silencing the most conspicuous retail-based market cues and camouflaging others under layers of material and socio-temporal domestic cues), luxury brands are able to foster an idealized and upper-class domestic atmosphere in their retail spaces that takes advantage of the domestic logic to welcome (i.e., *include*) visitors and attempt to make them feel as if they are part of an *exclusive* experience (i.e., invited into a fancy friend’s house, often the brand designer’s home).

4.2. Hybridization

45,000 books on ceiling-high furniture. Impression of a personal library, heterogeneous, simple (mostly paperbacks . . .) with a lot of French literature (Sagan, Sartre . . . seen at random): vast, empty because there are few products, and they are lost in the middle of the books, but a warm space nonetheless. (field notes)

This excerpt from our field notes at Sonia Rykiel flagship store illustrates a second strategic combination of domestic and market logic that we call *hybridization*. Whereas the disguise strategy involves hiding market cues under layers of domestic cues, the hybridization strategy manifests through the harmonious cohabitation of the domestic and market logics.

4.2.1. Hybridizing through material cues

The material hybridization of luxury retail spaces begins with their geographic location. Most major brands have stores in touristic areas, such as avenue des Champs Élysées, where luxury brands’ stores are mixed with mass-market brands’ stores. For example, we observed that on Champs Élysées, Louis Vuitton, JM Weston, Dior, Omega, and Rolex stores are mixed with brands such as Nike, The North Face, Sandro, and Addidas. In these neighborhoods, front doors are generally closed as in private dwellings (which borrows from the domestic logic). For some of these stores, such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Goyard, we observed people queuing in front of the stores, (which evokes the market logic). Luxury brands thus appear as participants to the commercial exhibition of a city that presents itself as the “capital of fashion.”³

Inside the store, creating a hybridized environment in which the domestic and market logics cohabit rests on the blending of domestic and commercial material cues. The domestication of the commercial experience is materialized by the profusion of items that are not for sale—objects, ornaments, decorations, furniture—and that strive to give the store the homey aspect of an elegant bourgeois residence, sometimes taking over the commercial items but not camouflaging them. For instance, we observed several stores in which (not-for-sale) fine books, deliberately opened, were displayed on tables or among the brands’ products. Importantly, these hybridized spaces are open and accessible to all visitors. **Picture 2**, for example, illustrates how luxury brands display their products in home-like settings.

³ <https://www.parisinfo.com/shopping>.



Picture 3. Mixing products displays and domestic cues in IWC store.

At Sonia Rykiel, products are integrated with books on bookshelves or displayed next to them so that consumers can alternate between perusing the designer's personal book collection and looking at the apparel the brand is selling (visible in the background of the picture). Similarly, the ready-to-wear area of the Hermès Sèvres flagship, located on the store's basement, is a hybrid space that ostensibly intermingles domestic elements (a lounge with leather armchairs, coffee tables, and a large fluffy carpet) with the brands' garments displayed on racks and shop mannequins. At Baccarat, the space is decorated as a bar room: fake half-empty glasses and cigars on ashtrays allude to staged aspects of "bourgeois" Parisian life and provide a background for the brand to stage its products. At Balmain, the showcasing of the space, as depicted in our field notes, resembles a typical Haussmann-style Parisian apartment, an idealized representation that we observed in many other luxury stores in Paris.

The store has a number of small furnishings and decorations, such as armchairs, sofas, a small bench near the stairs, potted plants, flowers, books, numerous windows, curtains, rugs. ... It looks like a traditional Haussmann Parisian flat with wall molding, decorative fireplace, ancient parquet floor. ... The dissimilar fitting rooms look like bedrooms. (field notes)

We observed similar combinations of market and domestic cues in IWC's store, as [Picture 3](#) depicts. Watches on sale are displayed among or next to elements imbued with domestic meanings, in particular domestic elements that one could expect to find in an upper-class living room: a low sideboard with a chess set on it, a counter with alcohols, a sitting area comprising a coach, armchairs with pillows, and a coffee table with a book on top.

Additionally, in some of these hybridized spaces, material market cues that we found typically hidden in the disguise strategy, are integrated and not camouflaged in the domestic setting staged by the brands. Consider for example, Guerlain St Honoré. As [Picture 4](#) shows, the cash register and the brand name are visible while being well embedded in a section of the store where the domestic logic dominates the space, made of narrow corridors and intimate rooms furnished with armchairs and coffee tables.

4.2.2. Hybridizing through socio-temporal cues

Some brands reinforce the perception of a bourgeois home by blending market cues and elements reminding of their familial lineage or founder in their stores. For example, portraits of the founder or important others partaking in the history of the brand that are often hung in prominent positions of the store or displays of the founder's and heirs' possessions act as reminders of the figures that contributed to forming a "brand dynasty" ([Arnould & Dion, 2023](#)), while imbuing the space with the aura of the founder and heirs among the assortment, as if they were still there ([Dion & Borraz, 2015](#)). This is salient at Boucheron store, for instance, in which the portrait of the founder is revisited by means of a screen (undetected to the naked eye), creating an in-motion painting and therefore visually reviving the founder. These items allow the brand to reconnect with the myth of a familial craftsmanship business targeting the happy few ([Kapferer, 2014](#)).

When the founders still play an active role in the house, the stores also serve as repositories for their personal possessions. For example, Simon (retail designer, perfume & cosmetics brand) evoked the brand's founder implication and personal touch in selecting the store's decorative elements:

At the beginning, there was no painting in the hallway and as time went by, she [the founder] gave me some stuff that she'd had in her house in Miami at one point. I ended up with a van full of works of art, and it all added up as I went along.



Picture 4. Integrating market devices (cash register and brand name) into a domesticated setting at Guerlain St Honoré.

She had some things that she really wanted to put in and others that just kind of fell into place. In the salon, you'll see, we bought the sofa, the sideboard came from her house in London, we bought things at auction and there's a frieze on the wall. One day, Madame came by with a cardboard bag full of these friezes. She told us what we could do with it. And in fact, it was in her bedroom in Miami. She took down the friezes that were on the wall of her house, she didn't really know what to do with them and we thought we'd put them in the salon (Simon, retail designer, perfume and cosmetics).

The blending between domestic and market cues also manifests during interactions between consumers and salespeople. Most of the time, the selling ceremony begins with a presentation of historical facts about the brand, its founder, and the key people who were involved in the development of the *maison* (Debenedetti, 2021). Such storytelling differs significantly from the mass-market selling pitch. Though present, the brands' products are not systematically prioritized in the extended narratives, in which passion for products goes with historical and family-related narratives. When products are evoked, the narrative primarily focuses on domestic anecdotes, such as the origin of the brand name, the historical characters who played a role in the development of the product, and/or the role of artisans in crafting products and transmitting their expertise, and then it moves to the passion for the brand's collection. For instance, at the beginning of our visit to Guerlain, the salesperson told us about the brand heritage:

The sales associate mentioned how Guerlain was a House that dated back to 1828 and that was made famous by its bottle, which was specially created for Empress Eugenie and Napoleon III for their wedding. She also explained how Pierre François Pascal Guerlain, the creator of Guerlain, composed the *Eau de Cologne Impériale*: because the empress suffered from migraines, he incorporated neroli (known to soothe headaches) in the Eau de Cologne. (fieldnotes)

A sales assistant at a jewelry brand also emphasized that the brand's staff "received special training on the brand's collections and history" so that they could share stories with customers.

The hybridization of the retail space, through the blending of domestic and market logics, aims to instill meanings of inclusivity through an exclusive customer experience that cannot, usually, be found in typical mass-market service environments. That is, by mobilizing material and spatio-temporal domestic cues, luxury brands try to make consumers feel included in this high-end privileged experience.

4.3. Juxtaposition

Actually, we have the advantage of having VIP lounges in every boutique of a certain size. These are dedicated lounges, with or without sliding doors, in which we welcome our customers. We call them VIPs, but in the end, everyone is a VIP with us. But we have two ways of selling. We have sales tables with more classic chairs, which you may have seen in Vendôme, and then we also have real lounges with sofas, coffee tables, and armchairs. (Bastien, retail designer, watches & jewelry brand)

In addition to the two previously described strategies, we found that luxury brands engage in the juxtaposition of the two logics, a strategy that leads to the implementation of vastly different service encounters or different "ways of selling" products, as mentioned in the aforementioned verbatim.

4.3.1. Juxtaposing through material cues

Decoupling domestic and market logics begins with a division of material spaces in the store, when possible. Most large luxury stores divide their space into multiple rooms, making them "graspable" and "thinkable," which are central character-

istics of homeyness (McCracken, 1989). A salesperson at a fashion store explained that people “feel good here because it’s quite a small cocoon”; another salesperson at a luxury shoes store pointed out a “cocoon space” inside the store with a comfortable couch and thick carpet for customers who want to take their time. Dividing the luxury store into smaller, separate spaces offers both protection and multiple levels of intimacy. Material partitions give the store an embracing aspect (McCracken, 1989), as we show on the map drawn after a visit to the Chanel store, rue Cambon, during which a sales representative explained: “[The store is] divided into several small rooms . . . it’s much nicer and more intimate” (see Fig. 1). We observed that the retail space consisted of nine rooms, with the first and largest room conspicuously devoted to rapid transactions. Six rooms are part of the “tour” (materialized with the arrow) that most customers take and in which the more “accessible” products (e.g., bags and accessories, shoes, sunglasses) are sold. The first space is separated from a more exclusive and domestic-imbued space dedicated to ready-to-wear by a flight of stairs. In this store, the brand proposes different trajectories to its customers. Customers primarily interested in a market-based transaction pass through the first space quickly and remain separated from customers who spend more time in the store in the less populated area dedicated to ready-to-wear. Access to some parts of the store is therefore modulated by material devices, which also act as invisible gates for some customers.

We found a similar pattern at Louis Vuitton Champs Elysées: leather bag counters are located immediately after the entrance. In this area, which is dedicated to products that represent approximately 70% of Louis Vuitton sales (Gallant, 2023), most customers aggregate around the counters, which enables fast and simple transactions for those not interested in going through an extended selling ceremony. Many busy salespeople work these counters, which creates an atmosphere for excitement. Beyond this area, cut off by stairs, steps, and stairways, is a quiet and intimate atmosphere, in stark contrast to the store entrance, for quick purchasers. Some stores, such as Cartier, rue de la Paix, are also organized as a series of small cabinets, in which jewelry pieces are displayed like decorations and where each customer can be hosted intimately and in isolation.

The intimate atmospheres of these exclusive spaces often build on domestic elements of decoration; some spaces may not even include market cues (absence of retail elements or products) and therefore are completely disconnected from the market logic. For example, some stores offer purely domestic spaces, such as dining rooms or entire apartments in which important people are invited. At Gucci, rue des Archives, we noted that “no brand products are featured in these salons, and there is no signage representing the brand, which accentuates the feeling of domesticity.” At L’Eclaireur, rue Hérold, a manager explained that a dining room, which is hidden (i.e., not directly visible to customers) but directly connected to the store, is available for people who want to extend their experience in the store (see Picture 5) and be treated like dwellers of a mansion enjoying their own cook.

Creating completely separate spaces is a way to offer privacy to some privileged customers and provide them with a high-end experience, adding a layer of exclusivity in the store (see Dion & Borraz, 2017). One sales representative in a jewelry store explained that they have a 160 square meter private flat with a dining room, a living room, a bedroom, and a bathroom that the brand uses to invite important customers for a night or two free of charge.

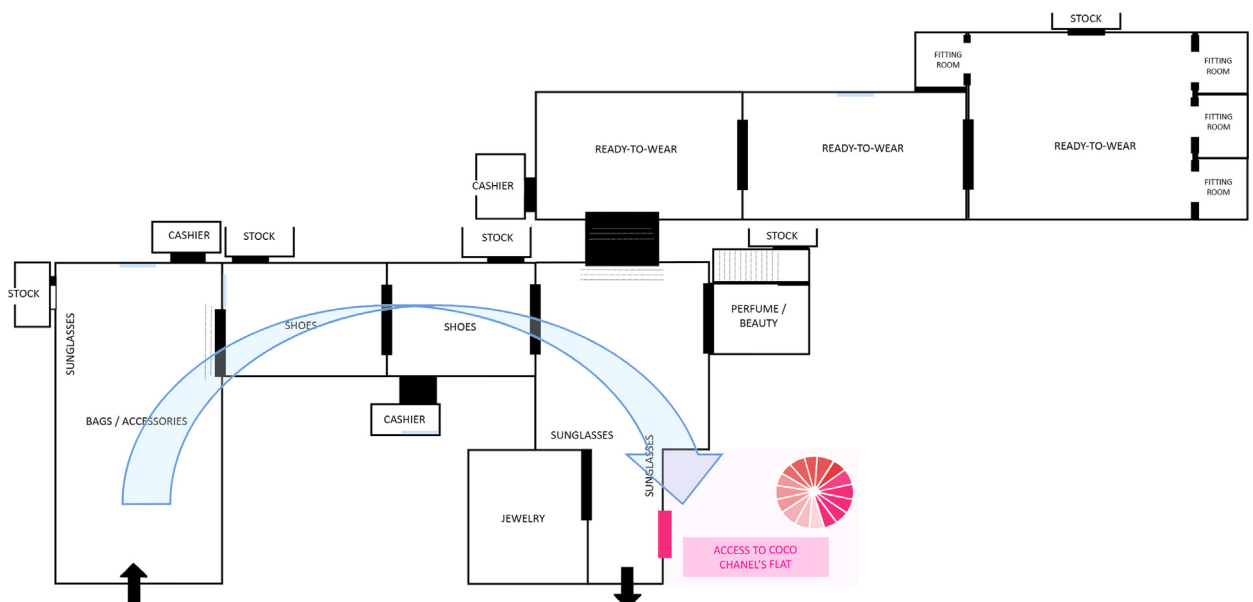


Fig. 1. Partitioning spaces in the floorplan of the Chanel store on rue Cambon.



Picture 5. The secluded dining room at L'Eclaireur Hérold.

4.3.2. Juxtaposing through socio-temporal cues

In addition to spatial zoning, which enables luxury brands to partition their stores, with spaces embedded in the market logic and spaces imbued with domesticity, we observed that luxury brands offer customers interactions anchored in different socio-temporalities. As mentioned previously, an essential difference between mass-market stores and their luxury counterparts is that social interactions occurring in the former tend to be characterized by an accelerated market-based temporality, as is evidenced, for example, by the use of devices such as the automatization of payment. By contrast, outside the zones in which best sellers are displayed and market-based transactions are the norm, the luxury stores we observed offer an overall perception of a “slowed down temporal experience” (Husemann and Eckhardt, 2019, p. 1142) that infuses every aspect of the experience, as we observed at Vacheron Constantin:

An atmosphere of wait characterizes the store: salespeople appropriate the space to wait and rest. I hear the sound of a clock, the salespeople in the lounge area are reading newspapers, and the watchmaker jokes about taking a nap in the corner but rolls his chair around so that he is visible when talking with me and the saleswoman. (field notes)

The entire removal from the market logic and transportation into the domestic world offered to some customers may be facilitated by accompanying objects and behaviors. Bastien explained:

I had bought a book that I thought was quite interesting about old houses in India, and there was an Indian customer who found his house inside. So, he asked if he could have it, and we offered the book to the customer! (Bastien, retail designer, watches & jewelry brand)

Here, the market exchange is replaced, if momentarily, by gift-giving: the market transaction gives way to a friendlier relationship, based on delicate attention to guests (Welté et al., 2022a). Luxury brands strive to instill a commercial friendship (Price & Arnould, 1999) with customers who are likely to appreciate it. While plying guests with drinks and cakes, as evoked in the first strategy (i.e., disguise), temporarily extends the temporal relationship in the store and embeds it in a domestic setting, some customers are also offered privileges that stretch beyond the (already-extended) sales process and that escape from the market logic. We found that an increasing number of stores (e.g., Audemars Piguet, Boucheron) dedicate some of their spaces to a penthouse in which special guests are invited for lunch, dinner, or even to stay overnight. These services are not charged but offered to the brand’s best customers, offering them a kind of extended upper-class domestic experience: At Boucheron for example, an informant reminds us that the flat is operated by the Ritz Hotel.

The domestic logic is also mobilized to extend the customer–brand relationship beyond within-the-store encounters. Many sales associates build personal relationships with their best clients and pursue interactions that take place in spaces and temporalities that completely break free from the market logic. As Swan et al. (2001) found, sales associates and customers engage in casual conversations and leisure activities, sales associates have lunch with customers outside the store, they have drinks with them during their free time, and they call them regularly without any business motive, just as friends would do. They sometimes become their customers' confidants. For example, a salesperson at a fashion brand described the close relationships she develops with some of her best clients, mentioning that they “talk like good friends” and that the customers and her want “to feel comfortable”.

Sales associates described how some customers visit stores as if they were dropping in to see friends, and they are actively encouraged to do so. Bruno explained that customers often come by just to say hello and spend time with sales personnel rather than shopping:

There is a regular customer who has been coming to see “his” salesperson for years. If he orders a watch he only wants to be served by her. So sometimes, we order a watch for him but she will proceed to the sale. Sometimes when he passes the store, he stops for a coffee even if he doesn't plan to buy. He just comes to say hello. (Bruno, sales manager, watch brand)

Managers also report that some customers even invite “their” sales associates to private events (e.g., weddings, vacations), thus further blurring the boundaries between the store and the outside world, mixing the family and private life with the relationship with the brand and therefore extending the temporality of interaction.

However, according to managers, not all customers of luxury brands are interested in building such an extended relationship with the brand. In particular, some consumers are not interested in the storytelling developed by the sales associates and rather expect fast and efficient service encounters (Welté et al., 2022b) that remain primarily situated in the market logic. Marc explained that sales associates accommodate these expectations and adapt the selling ceremony by speeding it up and refocusing on their narrative on products and prices:

We make customers touch the product, explain to them the differences between different leathers, but only when they are open to this. If the customer is not receptive, that is if she just wants a bag and doesn't care about the storytelling . . . Sometimes, we have customers who come with a bag reference, a photo and say, “I want that!” Of course, we must serve them well, and at the same time we know that they are not interested in History. They just want one [product], so we don't insist. (Marc, retail manager, fashion & accessories)

This quote shows that two of the main vessels used by the salespersons to create a domestic atmosphere—a stretched temporality and a storytelling that focuses on the brand history—are not always well received. Brands do not systematically impose their domestic logic on customers who may not wish to be part of the domestic rituals it entails.

Through the material partitioning of stores and variations of the selling ceremonials, luxury brands are able to juxtapose service encounters that are embedded in different socio-temporalities and logics and, in doing so, craft different experiences for different customers. Mobilizing the domestic logic allows luxury brands to propose different “ways of selling” (as mentioned in our introductory quote) that rest on a clear partition between the domestic and market logics. It also enables them to partition their different customers (occasional vs regular). The first two strategies (i.e., disguise and hybridization) combine the two logics in order to, even partially, include the ‘happy many’ in the exclusive experience offered by luxury brands. In contrast, the juxtaposition strategy enables these brands to simultaneously propose purely market-based encounters (for those wishing to remain embedded in the market logic) and recreate exclusive experiences that completely break free from the market logic for a limited selection of customers (the happy few). Juxtaposing the two logics thus enables luxury brands to offer different depths of inclusivity in the store and, by extension, within the consumption experience, without ostensibly excluding anyone as all visitors who wish to do so can benefit from a largely domesticated service encounter.

5. Discussion

In the introductory quote in the “Findings” section, a manager, questioned about the retail experience implemented by his brand, noted that customers can be more or less integrated into the luxury experience. This research uncovers the role of luxury brands' strategic mobilization of the domestic logic in integrating customers within the luxury experience but at the same time situating them at different levels of this experience. In doing so, luxury brands manage the conundrum they face by balancing the contradictory exclusivity and inclusivity imperatives. We suggest that the *domestication* of the luxury retail experience, that occurs at both the material and symbolic levels of the experience, enables luxury brands to remain exclusive while selling more to “happy many”. This study offers three interrelated contributions to research on strategic brand management.

5.1. Theoretical contributions

5.1.1. Domesticity as a strategic tool for brand management

First, we contribute to the nascent stream of research on domesticity in luxury retail and, in particular, to recent explorations of the manifestations of domesticity in luxury stores (e.g., Debenedetti, 2021; Welté et al., 2022a). Debenedetti (2021) shows that luxury stores can be home-like places and that domestic meanings are permeating the luxury in-store

narratives through material and social cues. Welté et al., 2022a allude to the presence of domestic meanings in luxury retail spaces, either through the appropriation of the space by different categories of customers or through the development of intimacy with salespersons.

Our study enriches previous accounts of cues imbued with domestic meanings (in particular with regard to the temporal dimension of domesticity) and goes further by showing how brands can strategically leverage the domestic logic and its rich repertoire of material and socio-temporal cues to pursue novel market opportunities and address market challenges. We uncover three strategies that luxury brands deploy in their stores to mobilize the domestic logic and articulate it with the market logic: the *disguise* strategy, which involves silencing market cues or camouflaging them under layers of cues imbued with domestic meanings; the *hybridization* strategy, which entails blending cues emanating from the two logics and creating spaces where the two logics are co-present; and the *juxtaposition* strategy, which consists of portioning the two logics, completely disconnecting them from each other.

Our findings show that luxury brands have significant discretion and flexibility in how they deploy these strategies (e.g., combining them with each other or using them in isolation in a single store). We thus argue that domesticity constitutes a useful tool for the strategic management of luxury brands. Although it primarily takes the form of an idealized representation of a Parisian 19th century bourgeoisie interior in the context we studied, luxury brands could and do mobilize domestic cues that pertain to different cultures. For instance, the tea that is offered to visitors who enter Shang Xia stores evokes Chinese tea ceremonial practices when welcoming family, friends, and guests into one's home.

Given the logic's plasticity, it could be fruitfully combined with other logics traditionally mobilized in the luxury field. For example, although Joy et al., (2014, p. 353) focus on the museification of Louis Vuitton's stores, they also mention how one of the stores they investigated "looks like the home of a collector of rare art and artifacts," which suggests that domestication could go along with the museification or artification process. The domesticity logic could also be strategically mobilized in settings in which the values it conveys are relevant. In the tourism and hospitality industry, for example, homey meanings pervade the experience through the staging of authentic places—that is, places incarnated by people and symbols.

5.1.2. Domestication of the retail experience to balance inclusivity and exclusivity

The evolution of the luxury field, shifting from the privilege of the elite to a more accessible market positioned to "capture the dreams of each consumer" (Chandon et al., 2016, p. 299), has been well documented. However, balancing customers' expectations for inclusivity triggered by the field's massification while conforming to expectations of singularity and exclusivity presents an important challenge for luxury brands (Dion & Arnould, 2011). Prior studies have investigated how brands seek to maintain exclusive experiences through the artification, museification, or sacralization of their luxury retail experience (e.g., Dion & Borraz, 2015; Joy, 2022; Joy et al., 2014; Logkizidou et al., 2019) or through the management of customers' status (Dion & Borraz, 2017).

Our study proposes the *domestication* of the retail experience as an alternative response to the legitimacy crisis of the luxury field (Dion & Arnould, 2011; Dion & Borraz, 2017). In contrast with research that examines the conundrum from the perspective of maintaining exclusivity despite pushes for mass-marketization, our study suggests that luxury brands draw on different combinations of the domestic and market logics to balance these two imperatives in their retail spaces. That is, we demonstrate that articulating the domestic and market logics allows them to manage (and even transcend) this contradiction. Table 3 summarizes our findings and interpretations.

Each strategic combination of logics rests on underlying mechanisms that are supported by a set of material and socio-temporal cues. We propose that these practices lead to two ways of preserving the exclusivity of the luxury experience while selling to the "happy many". Disguise and hybridization favor a more inclusive experience within luxury brands' exclusive encounters (even when the inclusion remains superficial). Juxtaposition, however, integrates customers only interested in completing a commercial transaction in a purely market-oriented experience while reserving the exclusive domestic-based dimensions of the experience to selected customers. In doing so, luxury brands offer different ways of navigating and inhabiting luxury stores.

Our study uncovers the ambivalence of domesticity, whose mobilization by luxury brands enables them to jointly facilitate customers' integration into the luxury retail experience (by welcoming them as friends or family members) and segregate them (by offering different experiences and situating customers at different depths in the retail experience). That is, we propose that domesticity acts both as an integration mechanism and a separation mechanism, thus transcending the contradictory imperatives of being inclusive while remaining exclusive.

Circling back to the introductory quote of our "Findings" section, and to the manager's claim that who they are dictates "how far in the house" customers are introduced, we propose a continuum of domesticated retail experiences (as Fig. 2 depicts), characterized by differing levels of embeddedness—'vestibule', 'lounge', and 'chamber'—and likely to target different types of consumers. Although the domestic logic is leveraged along the whole continuum and a wide array of domestic cues is made available to customers to situate them in the luxury service encounter, it is not imposed on those who are "friendship adverse" (Price & Arnould, 1999, p. 50) and exclusively want transaction-based interactions.

Disguise and hybridization aim at integrating stores' visitors into the luxury experience by providing a friendly, more accessible retail encounter (see Fig. 2). All visitors who wish to take the time are treated as family members or guests, invited in the 'salon' (i.e., lounge), and offered the possibility to be immersed in a high-end shopping experience. In contrast, juxtaposition enables brands to segregate customers. On one side of the continuum, customers that only care about completing a commercial transaction are kept in the 'vestibule' and offered the opportunity to complete their shopping efficiently. They

Table 3

The strategic combination of the domestic and market logics in luxury stores.

Strategic combination of logics	Disguise	Hybridization	Juxtaposition
Graphic representation of the combinations 			
Underlying mechanisms	Camouflaging the market logic under the domestic logic Silencing the market logic	Blending domestic and market logics	Partitioning domestic and market logics
Practices	Material Hiding material market cues Replacing material market cues by domestic cues Socio-temporal Replacing market semantics by domestic ones Long speeches No temporal restrictions	Material Cohabitation between homey items and market cues within the same space Socio-temporal Integrating brand storytelling into product-oriented sales pitches Mixing History and passion for products in extended interactions	Material Decoupling domestic- and market-oriented spaces Modulating customers' access to purely domestic spaces Socio-temporal Adapting types of social and temporal interactions to customers
Practical examples	Replacing commercial furniture (layouts, displays) by domestic furniture (cupboards, coffee tables, armchairs) Making commercial devices (cash registers, counters) inconspicuous Using domestic terms (maison, atelier, salon, guest) instead of commercial ones (brand, products, customers)	Mixing decoration and knick knacks with products, commercial furniture with domestic ones Mixing brand and products description with history of the house's owners	Dividing the store into dedicated areas: keeping the entrance for best sellers and short-term transactions / dedicating the rest of the space to extended experiences (with dual in-store presence for best sellers) and specific areas (lounges, dining rooms, VIP rooms) non dedicated to product-related conversations Training salespersons to short product-oriented speech and long domestic-oriented conversations
Role of domesticity in navigating the conundrum	Domesticity as an integration mechanism that renders the luxury exclusive experience more accessible to the 'happy many': – Welcomes all visitors/customers as members of the brand's "family" – Partially desacralizes the experience (and neutralizes its potential scariness) to open it to more customers		Domesticity as a separation mechanism that situates customers differently in the experience: – Reinforces the exclusivity of the experience for the selected few while proposing a completely disconnected and more inclusive experience for the 'happy many'

thus stay on the edge of the domestic experience. On the opposite side of the continuum, selected customers are offered an almost purely domestic experience that embeds them deeply in the 'chamber' while temporarily taking them out of the market. In other words, the market logic gives way to the domestic one, to the point at which at the very end of the continuum, market cues, whether material or socio-temporal, are almost entirely gone from the service encounter.

The situation of each customer in the luxury encounter is managed differently. For example, the cornucopia of material elements imbued with domestic meanings (e.g., family photos, comfortable coaches, furniture, paintings, intimacy provided by small rooms) aims to be immediately graspable by all with no specific need to interact with the sales personnel and enables brands to include all customers in the luxury experience through the material dimension of domesticity. By contrast, at the other end of the continuum, luxury brands tend to offer selected customers rather product-free (e.g., products are rare or even absent in spaces dedicated to privileged customers), intimate (e.g., relationships are treated and received in a home-like way), and spatio-temporally decompressed (e.g., interactions occur outside the stores and/or are disconnected from immediate transactions) experiences and relationships with the brands.

In summary, luxury brands appear to use the domestication of the retail experience as a means to include all customers within the brand experience through graduated embeddedness. The more the brand mobilizes the domestic logic in its retail space, the more it leads to a service encounter that moves away from the materiality of the product technical features and that is embedded in a decompressed temporality that favors the development of an intimate, friendly relationship with the brand, through its salespersons. The domestic logic allows luxury brands to instill meanings of inclusivity within an exclusive experience that is made more accessible but remains in stark contrast to the typical transaction-based inclusivity that

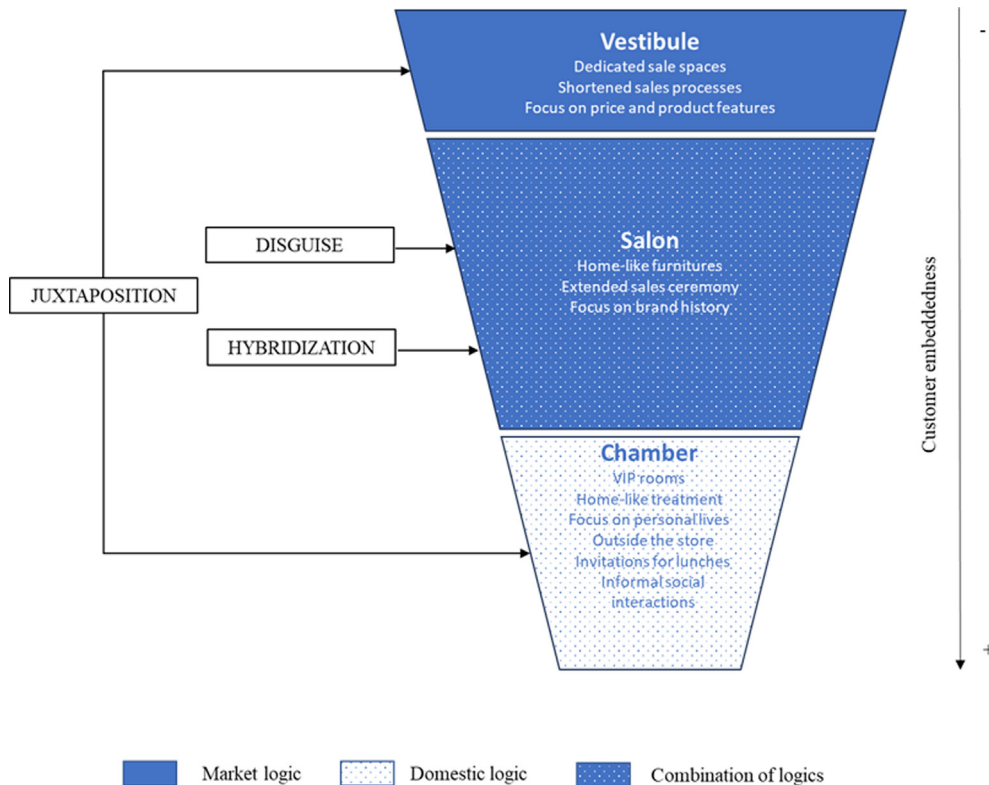


Fig. 2. The continuum of domesticated luxury retail experiences.

characterizes mass-market sales processes while offering to the happy few exclusive experiences and privileges that do not devalue the experience that lower-status customers are offered.

Our findings thus imply that though balancing the inclusivity and exclusivity imperatives might appear paradoxical, the domestication of the retail experience enables luxury brands to manage them jointly. The plasticity and richness of the domestic logic, as well as its compatibility with the values of luxury, allow brands to manipulate and adapt the material and socio-temporal dimensions of the service encounter to offer different experiences to their consumers.

5.1.3. Institutional logics as a framework to understand consumer–brand relationships

Our research and findings also highlight the potential contributions of the institutional logics framework for marketing research. In line with recent marketing studies mobilizing institutional logics (e.g., Dolbec et al., 2022b; Dolbec & Fischer, 2015; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Grant et al., 2023; Welté et al., 2022b; Zanette & Scaraboto, 2019), we argue that research on strategic brand management naturally intersects with institutional theory–based frameworks because it allows the development of an approach that combines macro- and micro-level perspectives on the dynamics underlying the consumer–brand relationship. At the macro level, institutional logics are “bundled sets or ensembles of higher order meanings, values, norms, and/or rules that frame how individuals make sense of the world around them and consequently know how to act” (Cloutier & Langley, 2013, p. 361). However, these logics are instantiated, at the micro level, through a “repertoire of tools and specific resources that actors can draw on, both discursively and materially” (Cloutier & Langley, 2013, p. 363), for instance through brand management.

Prior works in marketing often take the presence and pressure of logics for granted and tend to consider that actors’ agency with regards to these logics is constrained. These works have primarily looked at how brands react to the conflicting demands of logics coexisting within the institutional field (e.g., Dolbec et al., 2022b; Ertimur & Coskuner-Balli, 2015; Welté et al., 2022b) or at how consumers experience these conflicts or contradictions (e.g., Zanette & Scaraboto, 2019) and make sense of them (Grant et al., 2023). Our exploration of the intersection between brand management and institutional logics suggests that brands have a higher capacity for agency vis-à-vis institutional logics than previously discussed. That is, we show that institutional logics are not simply contextual elements that market actors need to make sense of and adapt to but also instruments that brands can strategically and proactively mobilize and deploy to generate new brand meanings and give sense to their relationships with consumers. Our study specifically illustrates how, faced with a conflict that occurs within the market logic (rather than between logics), brands can strategically draw on the meanings associated with a logic pertaining to a non-market field (i.e., the domestic logic) to transcend the conundrum they confront.

By mobilizing this macro-level framework, we thus provide insights into micro-level practices that unfold in luxury retailing and explore how the strategic combinations between two logics manifest at the material and socio-temporal levels. In doing so, this research falls in line with an expanding research stream that examines market interactions within a market-system dynamics perspective (e.g., [Debenedetti et al., 2021](#); [Giesler, 2008](#); [Giesler & Fischer, 2017](#); [Humphreys, 2010](#); [Philippe et al., 2022](#)), a perspective that is particularly interested in understanding the relationships between market actors and the multi-dimensional contexts in which they are embedded. Our findings illustrate how brands can leverage institutional logics to address challenges and pursue novel market opportunities ([Dalpiaz et al., 2016](#)).

Our findings also suggest that the institutional logics framework holds the potential to further our understanding of how brands can promote positive consumer experiences and how they can manage their status or legitimacy in the eyes of consumers. As mentioned previously, these dynamics could be explored outside the luxury field, as evidenced by the variety of settings in which they have already been investigated (e.g., yoga, coffee, crowdsourcing markets). Although uncovered in the setting of luxury retailing, we argue that the three strategies we identified are neither context-specific (i.e., they are likely to be encountered in fields with competing logics) nor logic-specific (i.e., they can be mobilized to combine any logic).

5.2. Implications for marketing management

Today, luxury brands are democratized by social networks and frequented by consumers who have acquired knowledge and skills about them ([Wang, 2022](#)) from these same networks. This constitutes an important managerial issue because young consumers (Generations Y, Z, and Alpha), who will represent 80% of global purchases by 2030 according to [Bain & Company \(2022\)](#), “take to online spaces to share their voice on their own terms” ([Stahl & Literat, 2023, p. 926](#)) and are likely to share their in-store experiences on social networks: focusing only on maintaining exclusivity for the happy few and failing to include many others is likely to be counter-productive.

To align with these societal shifts, we argue that luxury brands need to take each type of visitor's expectations into account and that building on domestic cues can contribute to meet diverse expectations more easily. As far as the younger generations are concerned, for instance, inserting hints of domesticity into stores is likely to encourage their sharing on social media, by creating an ‘authentic’ stage around products that is easy to ‘capture’ and that facilitates the writing of more embodied and impactful content / stories around the brand experience.

More generally, this means that luxury brands must situate customers in appropriate zones. Offering transaction zones and intimate zones in their stores caters to the needs of customers situated at the extreme ends of the continuum: quick buyers and VIPs. The remaining visitors should be managed and situated in the consumption experience as commercial friends “in the making.” Managing materiality, as some luxury brands have begun doing, thus becomes crucial: displaying elements referring to domestic life, including family or History-related objects constitutes a way to immerse customers in the luxury encounter with two main benefits: making them comfortable and facilitating their appropriation of the brand while leaving salespeople free to handle more demanding, time-consuming customers. It thus enables brands to offer both inclusive and exclusive encounters to a larger target, with no excessive financial investment. In addition, brands could better manage their space to separate quick buyers, who are primarily product oriented, and customers who favor a deeper immersion in the luxury house. In flagship stores, for example, double-in-store presence of best-selling categories could be a way to manage customers' different expectations of the sales ceremony and avoid imposing quick-selling transactions on customers seeking more extended selling ceremonies.

Furthermore, our research highlights the need for an evolution in sales training, particularly the use of inclusive scripts adapted according to customers' status: at a time of rapid development of social networks ([Czellar et al., 2020](#)), certain sales practices, linked to intimidation (and exclusion), are becoming problematic: “fine-tuning” the discourse according to customers' situatedness in the experience and telling a story that allows them to be included in the brand's story and enjoy the luxury encounter are important. Brands should therefore offer a discourse that not only draws on domestic semantics that are already present but also is delivered according to domestic values (e.g., tradition, politeness) and in a temporality that corresponds to the customer: a few minutes may be enough to turn a visitor into a future customer. Here again, these marks of superficial inclusion, through a “graduated” domestic discourse, do not seem complex to implement.

5.3. Avenues for future research

This study suggests new avenues for research on luxury branding. Our research suggests that luxury brands, through the use of domestic cues, can more finely construct their commercial relationships with consumers. However, while our research shows the existence of a continuum of commercial friendship, as all customers are, admittedly, considered “friends of the house” though at different levels of depth or closeness, it does not allow us to define its exact contours. Even if not all customers are interested in building a friendship bond, and if some are even “friendship adverse” ([Price & Arnould, 1999](#)), the management of commercial friendships and a more detailed consideration of the continuum of friendship forms merit further examination.

First, to pursue directly in the line of this study and further explore the perspective of the brand, future research could investigate the following question: with regard to the institutionalization of the domestic logic at the level of frontline employees, how and to what extent can luxury brands induce employees to foster this logic in the way they handle the service encounter? In addition, [Welté et al. \(2022b\)](#) show the negative outcomes of intimacy for salespeople engaging in service

encounter with customers situated on the deeper end of our continuum. They explain how gift-giving and secrets shared with wealthy customers may transform them into minions, suggesting that entering in close relationship with some customers is risky. Future research could thus also investigate the extent to which domestic “traps” occur when luxury brands start to include other types of customers.

Although our findings show that brands have flexibility when mobilizing the different strategies, brands' ability to deploy them in their retail spaces might be, to some extent, affected by the stores and the brands' characteristics. Exploring how these characteristics impact brands' deployment of the domestic repertoire would constitute an interesting avenue for future research. For instance, stores located in a touristic or highly frequented area and surrounded by mass-market brands may have more difficulty completely masking the market logic. Exclusive stores may have more freedom in combining logics than shop-in-shop or travel retail spaces, which are included in mass-market-oriented spaces. Flagship stores may be better suited for the deployment of a juxtaposition strategy, as their size facilitates the material portioning of spaces. Brands' ability to mobilize the strategies may also depend on their characteristics, such as level of accessibility (Barnier et al., 2012) or legitimacy in the field (Philippe et al., 2022). For instance, would the disguise strategy be easier to deploy when the brand needs to legitimize itself as a luxury brand due to, for example, its recency or when it pertains to the category of inaccessible luxury, which sits at the antipodes of mass-market? In contrast, would the hybridization strategy be easier to implement when the brand is more accessible and intermediary?

Second, we elected to adopt the perspective of the brand, drawing on data from observations of luxury boutiques and formal and informal interviews with managers and salespeople. Our study, however, did not evaluate consumers' perceptions. In particular, we did not investigate customers' understanding of the domestic logic (or lack thereof) identified in this article. Exploring how customers (situated at different levels of the brand experience) perceive the domestication of the luxury experience constitutes a promising avenue for research. To what extent do they perceive this domestication? By contrast, how do they relate to the market logic present in stores? Does the presence of the domestic logic influence their perceptions of being included or not in the luxury experience? Do they perceive different levels of embeddedness in the experience? It would be particularly useful to explore the experiences of the younger generation, who are more informed and more involved in social networks than their elders given the weight they represent for the luxury industry today.

Future research could also investigate the outcomes of the domestication process in terms of effectiveness: does the domestication of the experience positively impact sales, loyalty, or word-of-mouth. Are some strategies more efficient than others in boosting sales or in ensuring customer loyalty and positive word-of-mouth? Future research could also explore the negative consequences of a potentially excessive domestication of the retail experience. Prior research in marketing has highlighted the downside of close relationships. For example, Marcoux (2009) shows that some people might find the gift economy unattractive because of its expectations of reciprocity, which prompts them to escape the gift logic and return to the market. Similarly, exploring the dark side of place attachment, Eroglu and Michel (2018) and Debenedetti and Chaney (2024) respectively show that (1) attached customers who fear that they are losing their sense of freedom will therefore elect to reduce or discontinue the patronage of places to which they are attached, (2) managers' attachment to their stores unconsciously lead them to accept and even favor detrimental behaviors from their attached customers. These potential downsides thus prompt two questions: How does excessive domestication affect consumers' relationship with the brand? and What coping strategies do consumers who feel trapped in a domesticated consumer-brand relationship deploy?

Finally, this research focuses on the staging of consumption experiences in retail spaces through the deployment and combination of two institutional logics. To complement this perspective, research could explore the mobilization of the domestic logic in other areas of these luxury consumption experiences, especially in online spaces, where domestic meanings are also disclosed (Debenedetti, 2021) but in sections disconnected from the sales' online space. For example, the LVMH website portrays itself as a “home to 75 distinguished Houses” while claiming that each of its “brands build on a specialty legacy while keeping an unwavering focus on the exquisite caliber of its products” (emphasis added), thus showing a subtle use of market- and domestic-related semantics within the brand's narrative. An avenue for exploration would thus be to investigate brands' narratives to determine whether and how the domestication of the luxury experience manifests and the extent to which the logics mobilized are consistent with those used in retail spaces.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Alain Debenedetti: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Supervision, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Déborah Philippe:** Writing – review & editing, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Formal analysis, Conceptualization. **Delphine Dion:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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