Customising gifts for oneself and others: the impact of anxiety and perceived design skill on customer value dimensions and the effect of complexity

Céline STIRIS

JUNE 2022

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Kingston University for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

ABSTRACT

Purpose- In the past decade, product customisation has developed globally, across a wide range of product categories, particularly in the context of gifting. While customisation provides experiential benefits to consumers and increased opportunities for retailers, the trade-offs between the experiential benefits and the 'costs' of customisation are not well understood, especially in the context of gifting. This thesis investigates the relationship between perceived customisation complexity, anxiety and self-perceived design skill and their impact on the value provided by customisation in the context of gift- giving and self- gifting. The effect of these relationships on purchase intention of the customised gift is also examined.

Design/methodology/approach- Using a real customisation webpage of a luxury brand, a scenario-based experiment was conducted involving two manipulations: the complexity of the customisation task (high complexity vs. low complexity) and the nature of the recipient: self-giving vs. gift giving. The data were collected via an online self-completion questionnaire administered via a reputed market research agency. Respondents were randomly allocated to the four experimental groups. The conceptual framework of the thesis was tested by using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) and ANOVA.

Findings- Results show that self-perceived design skill decreases anxiety and has a positive effect on all value dimensions provided by the customisation experience, except uniqueness value. Apart from creative achievement value, all other value dimensions have a positive impact on the purchase intention of the customised bag. As for the negative aspects of gift customisation, the findings confirm that perceived complexity increases anxiety which in turns decreases the perceived value conferred by customisation. However, contrary to expectations, the nature of the recipient, self vs. other, does not affect the relationships hypothesised in the model.

Originality/value- This thesis extends knowledge in the domains of consumer value, customisation and gifting. Firstly, by increasing our understanding of the dimensions of consumer value in the context of gift customisation, the study extends the application of Theory of Consumption Values relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour. Further, this research contributes to Benefit Theory by demonstrating that gift customisation offers not only functional benefits but also social and psychological benefits to consumers.

Practical implications- This research is of value to managers willing to ensure an optimal gift customisation experience and increase online sales. The findings provide useful insights

for companies for the development or adaptation of appropriate customisation programs to maximise the value consumers gain from gift customisation and decrease any anxiety they may experience.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my family and my friends who have supported me through this long and tough journey. A special thanks to my husband, Alex, who has been extremely patient, and supportive despite my mood swings. He has been working very hard for the family for the past six years to allow me to be a student again. To my children, Charlotte, Inès and Oscar who always believed in me. And to my mum, Pierrette, who listened to me patiently when I was a bit down.

My sincere thanks go to my fantastic first supervisor, Professor Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley, from whom I learnt so much. She has always been there for me, with endless patience. She helped write my thesis methodically with an impressive rigor, and attention to details. She was a great mentor I could fully trust to guide me through this journey.

My sincere thanks also go to my second supervisor, Dr Jaywant Singh who had a very complementary approach to Francesca. He helped me see the big picture of my research and the light at the end of the tunnel when I was feeling hopeless.

Finally, I would like to thank my childhood friend, Dr Caroline Ardelet who was the one who encouraged me to take this journey. Her successful career is a true inspiration. Sharing her experience was priceless and helped me to stay motivated.

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

List of Figures

List of Tables

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The days of Henry Ford's manufacturing mantra, "Any customer can have a car painted any colour that he wants as long as it is black," are long gone. The concept of mass customisation is not new, it was first introduced by Davis (1987) and later developed by Pine (1993, p.44), who defined it as *'developing, producing, marketing and delivering affordable goods and services with enough variety and customization that nearly everyone finds exactly what they want'.* Therefore, the objective of mass customisation is to meet the needs of individual customers by providing one-to-one marketing on a mass basis (Kara and Kaynak, 1997; Gilmore and Pine, 1997; Peppers and Rogers, 1997). In the 1980s, mass-customisation was thought by some academics to be a precursor of a new paradigm for manufacturing, replacing mass production (Pine, 1993; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Even though mass production has remained the conventional manufacturing practice, in the past decade mass customisation has developed globally and across a wide range of product categories (e.g., wine, chocolate, shoes, cosmetics, fashion, smartphone cases, games for children). Indeed, customisation used to apply only to specific sectors such as cars, men suits and perfumery, but now household brands like Nutella or Nike have also added customisation into their marketing strategy.

The key contributing factors to this development are recent technological innovations such as 3D printing and the substantial use of web-based product configurators (Fogliatto, Da Silveira and Borenstein, 2012; Sandrin *et al.,* 2017), also known as mass-customisation systems or toolkits (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser*,* 2010). Today, mass-customisation systems provided by retailers and manufacturers give consumers the opportunity to create unique self-designed products (De Bellis *et al.*, 2016). The end-user can personalise the product design, colour, functionalities, and add-on features, right from the online store. 'Customers want customization, and companies are giving it to them' (The New York Times, 2020). From start-ups to big brands, businesses are offering personalised product options to extend their product lines and increase sales. Customisation has recently entered a new phase in the broader trend to offer customers customised products. It now involves customisation that is not only aesthetic in nature, for instance choosing blue instead of red, but is based on features unique to the customer, such as their body measurements, skin tone or hair type. Here are a few examples of customisation offers across sectors:

Table 1. Examples of customisation offers

Sector	Brand Name	Customisation offer
Food	Nutella	Customised labels: 'Make me Yours'
Beauty	Function of Beauty	Customised hair, body and skin care products
Health	Care/of	Customised vitamins
Shoes	Nike ID, FitMyFoot	Customised trainers
Fashion	Amazon	Customised t-shirts: 'Made for You'
Bags	Longchamp	Customised bags: 'My Pliage Personalised'
Cars	Tesla	Customised cars based on driver' preferences

Source: The Author

The expansion of customisation has been particularly significant in the context of gifting. For instance, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011, p.120) note that *'many customisation firms (e.g., Zazzle, CafePress from the US) are positioning themselves as key sources for unique gifts'.* Notonthehighstreet.com, which only sells personalised gifts, is the biggest online gifting marketplace in the UK, with more than 39 million unique visitors annually. Ben Perkins, director of consumer research at Deloitte, stated that the practice of turning everyday humdrum items into personalised gifts is "quickly drifting into the mainstream" (The Financial Times, 2016). Analysts highlight that the development of the gifting culture and the increased demand for seasonal gifts such as personalised mugs, handkerchiefs, and plates is high in developed countries, especially during holidays like Halloween, Easter, New Year, and Christmas (Technavio, 2018). The global market for personalized gifts, estimated at US$25.8 billion in the year 2020, is projected to reach a revised size of US$43.3 billion by 2027, growing at a CAGR of 7.7% over the period 2020-2027 (PR Newswire, 2020).

To summarise, advances in technology (e.g., 3D printing), and social and market factors (e.g., more occasions when gifts are exchanged) have contributed to the rise in the popularity of mass-customisation. Consumers customise gifts through personalisation, configuration, or on-demand printing to add value and make their gifts unique.

Furthermore, the increasing salience of the experiential side of shopping has been another contributing factor to the development of customisation. Providing a strong customer

experience is now a prominent management objective. According to a study conducted by Accenture (2015), global firms, such as Amazon, and Google, have set the improvement of their customers' experience as a top priority and have established teams solely dedicated to this purpose. In December 2020, Amazon launched a 'Made for you' service in the US, where customers can upload their body measurements. Amazon then builds a 'virtual body double' that allows to customise t-shirts to the customer's preferences and see how it would look like on their body (CNBC, 2020).

In the marketing literature, Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Schmitt (1999) were among the first scholars to highlight the importance of customer experience. They argued that firms could benefit from creating strong and durable customer experiences. Ten years later, Verhoef *et al.* (2009, p. 32) defined customer experience in a retailing context as *'a multi-dimensional construct which is holistic in nature and involves the customer's cognitive, affective, emotional, social, and physical responses to the retailer'*. Indeed, evidence from research highlights that even when purchasing mass-market products, consumers want exciting purchase experiences (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Fiore, Lee and Kunz*,* 2004; Verhoef *et al.,* 2009; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016) and are increasingly looking for uniqueness (Franke and Schreier 2008; De Bellis *et al.,* 2016, 2019). 'Consumers are always looking for creative and unique gifts rather than conventional gifts' (Dataintelo, 2019). Although most consumers still do purchase standard products, customisation is a trend that many brands have now included as part of their product offer, especially when it comes to gifting. Indeed, the swift shift from the traditional gifts to personalised gifts for different occasions is expected to stimulate the growth of the market (Dataintelo, 2019).

1.2 Rationale for the Research

While the customisation experience may provide experiential benefits to the consumers and increased opportunities to the retailers, it also involves challenges and costs. Customising a gift is a more demanding process than purchasing a standard product. For the retailer, it implies that the customisation toolkit must be designed to optimise the consumer experience during the creative process.

The actual experience of creating a gift together with the customised product itself create value for the consumer. The value dimensions conferred by customisation have been identified by Merle *et al.* (2010). Gifting also provides hedonic value. Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts (2007,

p.901) defined the experiential benefits of gifting as the 'thrill of the hunt', or the 'enjoyment' resulting from finding 'the perfect gift'.

As for the costs, gift customisation can be overwhelming due to the large set of options sometimes offered by the customisation toolkits. In addition, the consumer may be in doubt of the recipient's gift preferences or maybe even be unsure about their own tastes (Simonson, 2005). As such, the gift customisation experience may be accompanied by feelings of perceived complexity and even anxiety (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

Given the expected growth in the sector of customised gifts, it is salient to have a clear understanding of the consumer's psychology, i.e., positive and negative feelings, behind gift customisation in order to optimise the experience and ensure purchase. However, to this date, the trade-offs between the experiential benefits and the 'costs' of customisation are not well understood. Therefore, this study investigates both positive and negative experiences emanating from the customisation process. As such, this research contributes to knowledge in the domain of consumer value, which is a salient construct in the field of customisation in the context of gifting and, more broadly, in the field of consumer behaviour.

Seminal research papers in consumer perceived value are discussed in the section 2.3 of the literature review. Perceived value is a construct that is complex and polymorph (Holbrook, 1994; Gallarza, 2015, 2017). Since consumer perceived value has always been at the core of both customisation (Schreier, 2006; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Yoo and Park, 2016; Klesse *et al*., 2019; Moreau *et al.*, 2020) and gifting (Lowes, Turner, and Wills, 1968; Belk, 1979; Mick and DeMoss, 1992; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007; Givi and Galak, 2017, 2019), it is important to understand the factors that may impact it in a positive (e.g., self-perceived design skill) or negative way (e.g., perceived complexity, anxiety).

Moreover, following an extensive review of the literature in both fields of customisation and of gifting, it is apparent that researchers have focused mainly on consumers who design products for themselves (Franke and Piller, 2004; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Moreau and Herd, 2010; Fogliatto, Da Silveira and Borenstein,2012; Aichner *et al.,* 2019). Among the studies that have examined customisation in the specific context of gift-giving, Bonney, Herd and Moreau (2011) investigate consumers' reactions to customised products and show that the intended recipient (self or other) influences expectations, emotions, satisfaction and willingness to pay. Furthermore, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) compare the role of self-

perceived design skill and design support on the consumer anxiety triggered by customisation in the context of self-gift giving vs. gift giving.

In sum, to the author's best knowledge, in the context of gifting (self or other), there are no studies investigating the positive impact of self-perceived design skill or the negative effect of the perceived challenges (complexity and anxiety) of customisation on consumer perceived value. Consequently, this research provides a better understanding of the perceived value and of the challenges influencing consumers' psychology during the gift customisation experience either for themselves or for someone else. This advance in knowledge contributes to extant theories (see chapter 3) and will be valuable for managers when developing online customisation programs.

1.3 Overall aim and objectives of the Research

The overall aim of this research is to investigate the positive and negative aspects of customisation in the specific context of gifting, and their impact on perceived value, and ultimately on purchase intention, in the contexts of self-gift giving and interpersonal gifting. As explained in detail in section 2.11 Literature Review Conclusions, p.42, this research aims to complement Merle *et al.*'s (2010) work on customisation value dimensions. The purpose of this thesis is also to build on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) research who compared gift customisation in the context of self-gifting and gift giving, highlighting the influence of self-perceived design skill and the challenges of gift customisation, i.e., perceived complexity and anxiety.

On one hand, when considering the benefits of gift customisation, this research aims to broaden our knowledge of the dimensions of consumer value conferred by customisation in the context of self-gift giving and interpersonal gift giving. This thesis contributes to a better understanding of the various value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation based on the dimensions previously identified by Shreier (2006) and Merle *et al.,* (2010). Also, the significant positive effect of self-perceived design skill on the perceived value is analysed.

On the other hand, the act of customising a gift may also provoke negative feelings. Firstly, customising a gift is deemed more difficult than purchasing a standard product because of the complexity of choice potentially leading to 'mass confusion' (Pine, 1993; Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Salvador, De Holan, and Piller, 2009; Fogliatto, Da Silveira and Borenstein, 2012; Frank, Dalenogare, and Ayala, 2019). In the context of self-gifting, the choice complexity is

heightened by the fact that consumers may actually have poor insight into their own preferences (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz and Steger, 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016). Conversely, purchasing gifts for a recipient typically involves even greater uncertainty than purchasing for self-use because recipients may have different preferences (Cleveland *et al.,* 2003; Segev, Shoham and Ruvio, 2012). The challenges associated with gifting situations can create a degree of anxiety for the giver that is absent or lower in the context of self-gift giving (Wooten, 2000; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Givi and Galak, 2017, 2019). Research shows that gift purchasing for self or others is a demanding task, requiring psychic effort in terms of the mental energy used in selecting a gift. Recently, Hwang and Chu (2019) noted that greater empathy prompted gift givers to spend more time and effort in gift selection. According to Larsen and Watson (2001, p. 896) *'this effort can range from thinking carefully about what gift to buy to actually creating or refining an object to give'.*

Given the above findings, 'gifting' and 'customisation' can generate stress and confusion. Therefore, one can expect that the combination of 'gifting' (for oneself or other) and "customisation", rather than purchasing a standard product, could potentially exasperate consumers' anxiety and could affect the perceived value provided by the customisation experience. Furthermore, according to Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011), the level of self-perceived design skill (high vs. low) can also impact the anxiety perceived during customisation. Their study suggested that offering design support could ease the anxiety arising from a combination of a gifting context and a perceived low design skill. Design support, however, did little to decrease the anxiety in participants customising for themselves.

Building upon Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Moreau *et al.*'s (2020) research in the fields of customisation and gifting, this study hypothesises the effects of perceived complexity on anxiety and the impact of anxiety and self-perceived design skill on the value provided by gift customisation. Ultimately, the effect on purchase intention of the customised gift in the contexts of gift- giving and self- gifting is also hypothesised.

In sum, this thesis has six objectives**. First,** this thesis aims to shed light on the impact of *perceived* complexity on the anxiety felt during the customisation process. The **second** objective is to assess the effect of self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety. **Third**, this research investigates the impact of anxiety and, **fourth**, of self-perceived design skill on the perceived value dimensions conferred by gift customisation. The **fifth** objective is to examine the impact of perceived value on the intention to purchase a customised gift. And finally, **sixth**,

this thesis aims to discuss the potential moderating impact of the nature of the recipient (self. vs other) on all relationships.

By reaching these objectives, this thesis attempts to answer the following research question: What are the effects of the positive and negative aspects of gift customisation on perceived value, and ultimately on purchase intention, in the contexts of self-gift giving and interpersonal gifting?

1.4 Theoretical Underpinnings and Contributions

This thesis brings significant contributions to three streams of literature – consumer value, customisation, and gifting. The findings relating to consumer value extend the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth, 1991), 'Benefit Theory' (Vershofen, 1959) and Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy, 1982). The findings relating to customisation and gifting contribute to Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954), Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959), Social Anxiety Theory (Schlenker and Leary, 1982) in the context of gifting leading to Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993).

Research into the benefits and costs of gift customisation contributes to two relating, but distinct, streams of literature. The first stream of research is the considerable number of studies published over the past 30 years or so on the topic of customisation (e.g., Davis, 1987; Pine, 1993; Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Franke and Piller, 2004; Schreier, 2006; Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser, 2010; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Moreau *et al.,*2020; Yoo and Park, 2016; De Bellis *et al.,* 2016, 2019 etc.). In parallel, the second stream of research has addressed issues relating to gifting (e.g., Belk, 1979, 1982, 1988; Caplow, 1984; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007; Weisfeld-Spolter, Rippé, and Gould, 2015; Chan and Mogilner, 2016; Givi and Galak, 2017, 2019). The contributions of this research to extant theories are developed in Chapter 3.

1.5 Applications to Business Practice

From a managerial standpoint, the findings of this research will help managers to have a better understanding of their customers' ambivalent feelings (i.e., perceived value, perceived complexity and anxiety) derived from the gift customisation process.

Given the potential for developing the customised gifts market, it is necessary for marketing managers to further understand the antecedents of consumers' willingness to customise gifts rather than simply 'picking a product from the shelf', despite the challenges associated with the customisation process, as well as the factors that may dampen consumers' desire of doing so. This understanding could help organisations to optimise their customers' experience and sustain growth. In particular, there is scope for a better understanding of consumers' perceived benefits and perceived costs and challenges during the creative process of customising a gift. This understanding provides useful insights for companies to develop or adapt appropriate customisation programs to maximise the value consumer gain from gift customisation and decrease any anxiety they may experience.

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is structured as follows. The next chapter, **Chapter 2**, 'Critical Literature Review' starts with a short paragraph setting out the definitions to avoid confusion for the reader of the following key terms: 'customisation vs. mass-customisation', 'self-gift giving vs. interpersonal gift giving', and 'perceived complexity vs. task complexity', followed by the outline of the search methodology for sourcing literature for the review.   A critical review of the extant customisation and gifting literature then provides the background for the research and identifies the knowledge gaps the research seeks to address and its contribution to the relevant extant theories. Particular attention is given to prior research on consumer perceived value, perceived complexity and the anxiety triggered by the experience of customisation in the context of gifting, as well as the role of self-perceived design skill. The effects of the positive and negative aspects of gift customisation on value are not well understood. Prior literature on the nature of the recipient of the customised gift (oneself vs. other) is also presented since one of the hypotheses put forward in. this thesis is that all relationships relating to gift customisation are different in the context of self-gifting vs. interpersonal gifting.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual framework of the thesis, stating the research aims and objectives. Research gaps, contribution to extant theories and hypotheses are also presented in detail. Research methodology is discussed in **Chapter 4**. The chosen research design including research data collection and methods of analysis are then presented. Comprehensive data analysis and the research findings are detailed in **Chapter 5**. Finally, the research findings are discussed in **Chapter 6** in the light of extant theories on consumer value, customisation and

gifting. The contributions to theory and to practice as well as the limitations of this thesis are addressed, along with suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2. Critical Literature Review

This chapter critically reviews and evaluates the extant academic literature on the benefits and challenges bestowed by customisation and gifting respectively. First, definitions of 'customisation vs. mass-customisation', as well as 'self-gift giving vs. interpersonal gift-giving', and 'perceived complexity vs. task complexity' are presented followed by the literature review methodology. Literature on consumer perceived value in general and more specifically in the contexts of customisation and gifting are then examined. Past research on consumers' perceived challenges provided by the customisation experience in the context of gifting are also discussed (i.e., perceived anxiety, self-perceived design skill and perceived complexity). Furthermore, this chapter reviews academic research relating to how self-gift giving and interpersonal gift giving may impact differently the gift customisation experience. Finally, based on past research, the relationship between gift customisation value dimensions and purchase intention of the customised gift is reviewed.

2.1 Definitions

To define the scope of the intended research, it is important to explain the difference between the following terms: 'mass-customisation, customisation and personalisation', 'interpersonal gift giving and self-gift giving' and between 'perceived complexity vs. task complexity', present in the literature.

Customisation and Mass-Customisation

From the organisation's perspective, the term 'mass-customisation' has been used by the operations management literature seeking to understand whether and how manufacturers can deliver customisation efficiently to the masses (e.g., Hedge *et al.* 2005; Squire *et al.* 2004; Yue *et al.* 2009; Merle *et al.* 2010; Tu, Vondermbse, Ragu-Nathan, 2001). In that context, mass-customisation refers to manufacturers assessing the trade-offs between customisation and cost, lead-time, productivity, and quality and identifying the best practices that can diminish such trade-offs.

Conversely, marketing scholars have been focusing on customisation from the consumer's perspective. The term 'mass-customisation' was introduced by Davis (1987) and later developed by Pine (1993, p.44), who defines it as *'developing, producing, marketing and*

delivering affordable goods and services with enough variety and customization that nearly everyone finds exactly what they want'. Whilst the term mass-customisation has been widely used in the marketing literature (Fiore, Lee, and Kunz, 2004; Schreier, 2006; Franke and Schreier, 2008; De Bellis, 2016; Aichner *et al.,* 2019), some authors in the field have preferred to use the term 'customisation' (Franke, Keinz and Steger, 2009; Bonney, Herd, and Moreau, 2011; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Moreau *et al.,* 2020). Marketing scholars have been using both terms 'mass-customisation' and 'customisation' interchangeably; this suggests a lack of consensus among scholars regarding which term should be adopted in the marketing literature.

For the purpose of this research, the term "customisation" is used. However, this term is intended to also encapsulate the concept of "personalisation". Personalisation is a 'subset' of customisation programs. It simply implies a more limited set of customising options of the product offered to the consumer. Customisation goes all the way from adding personal initials (i.e., personalisation), to helping customers create an entirely new product.

Interpersonal Gift Giving and Self-Gift Giving

Gift-giving behaviour has been studied in many areas such as anthropology (Mauss, 1954; Levi-Strauss, 1965) and consumer behaviour (Belk, 1976, 1979; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007; Givi and Galak 2017, 2019). These semantic studies in the field of gifting have defined gift giving as a multi-dimensional phenomenon which is context related. They have focused on interpersonal gift-giving, meaning giving a gift to another person, rather than on the process of making a gift to oneself. The practice of giving oneself a present was mentioned by the sociologist Schwartz (1967) and developed in the 1990s by Mick and DeMoss' studies of American consumers (Mick and DeMoss, 1990, 1992). They defined self-gifts as *'personally symbolic self-communication through special indulgences that tend to be premeditated and highly context-bound'* (p. 322).

Self-gift giving differs from gift giving to a recipient due to the motivational context in which it occurs. Interpersonal gift giving is a social exchange. It promotes the establishment, maintenance, and improvement of interpersonal relations (Laroche *et al.* 2000). Conversely, self-gift giving puts emphasis on self-indulgence, to make the person feel better or as a deserved self- rewarding (Mick and DeMoss, 1990). The various gift-giving functions suggest consumers' purchasing behaviour differ according to the context and occasion (Scammon *et al.,* 1982; Boncinelli *et al.,* 2019). For instance, Gronhaug (1972) found that consumers

employed different types and sources of information depending on whether the gift was for themselves or for a recipient. Ryan (1977) found gift shoppers more likely than those buying for personal use to have a target price range in mind for the purchase. The consequences of the two gifting scenarios (self-gift giving vs. interpersonal gift giving) on the benefits and challenges perceived by the consumer in the specific context of customisation are examined.

Perceived Complexity and Task Complexity

In this thesis, 'Perceived Complexity' relates to the level of complexity *felt* by the consumer during the customisation task, in other words, the measured continuous variable of the complexity of the task at hand. In this study, Perceived Complexity was measured using two items borrowed from the perceived complexity scale developed by Huffman and Kahn (1998) and one item from the choice difficulty scale developed by Valenzuela, Dhar and Zettelmeyer (2009), both in the context of customisation. In this thesis, 'perceived complexity' is considered as an antecedent of anxiety.

Conversely, 'Task Complexity' relates to the number of options available to the consumer in the customisation task. In this study, 'Task Complexity', high vs. low, was manipulated to increase the variance in the complexity felt by the respondent during the customisation task. The study participants were randomly assigned to either a 'low complexity task' (i.e., the customisation of a bag's colour and shape), or to a 'high complexity task' of customising a bag's colour, shape, trimming, zipper and snap finish, initials and stamping.

2.2 Literature Review Methodology

Search Method

The literature review provides both the context and the required theoretical framework (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016) for the research. A Traditional Review was selected for this research providing an overview of the research findings on particular topics. It is an iterative process, constantly evaluating and refining the parameters of the search, according to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill's (2016) suggested process (Fig.1). The review is conducted with pre-established structured methods.

For the intended study, a hybrid review strategy was undertaken. A traditional review of both customisation and the gifting literature was conducted but in 'a systematic way' covering

as many relevant articles as possible relevant to both fields, but prioritising research published in the top academic journals (ABS 3 or 4 star rated journals).

Figure. 1. The Traditional Literature Review Process
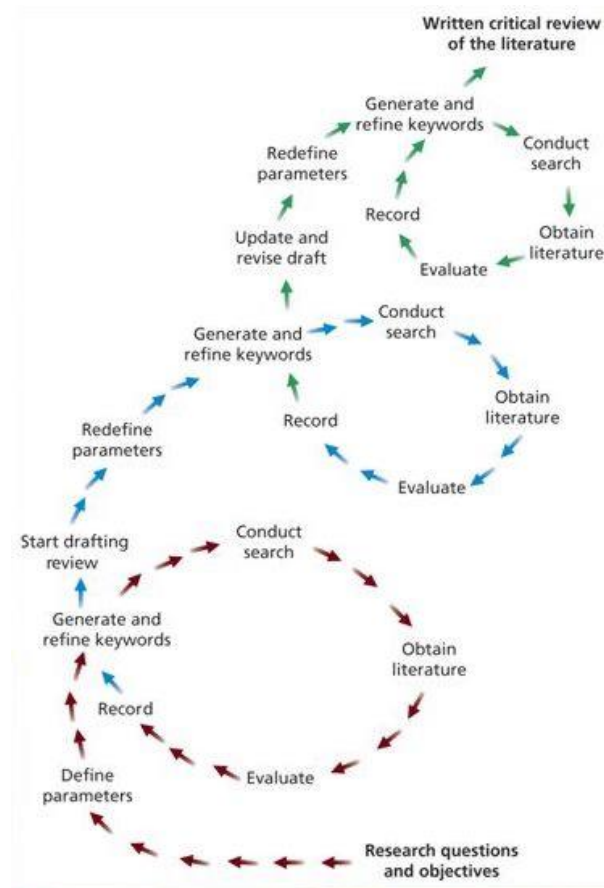
Source: Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis P., Thornhill A. (2016). *Research Methods for Business Students.* 7th edn. Pearson, p.73.

For this thesis, the topic of product customisation was chosen out of personal interest. As a consumer and professional marketer, the observation that, in practice, customisation has become increasingly popular across product categories prompted the researcher's interest. Initially, the review was conducted with the simple aim of becoming familiar with the academic studies in the field of customisation. There was no specific research question clearly stated beforehand. After reading numerous articles on customisation, it became apparent that despite the trade press highlighting the fact that the customised gift market was thriving, few academic studies had been conducted with regards to customisation in the context of gift giving.

The search protocol described below in Table 2 was based on two sources. Firstly, a search by keywords was conducted using the Business Source Premier (EBSCO) database. This database was chosen since it is the industry's most widely used business research database. *Business Source Premier* features full text and searchable cited references for top journals covering a variety of business disciplines. The customisation and gifting literature were searched using the following key words: 'customisation', 'consumer perceived value/benefits', 'gift giving', 'gifting anxiety', 'perceived complexity', 'self-perceived design skill' and 'purchase intention'. These key words emerged naturally following the reading of key articles in both fields and identifying the terms used repeatedly by the authors across the literature.

Table 2. Literature Review Search Protocol

Step in the Review Process	Outcome
Initial reading and topic selection	1. Topic of customisation 2. Topic of gift giving
Publication selection on basis of discipline and ranking	1. Circa 150 articles from ABS ranked 3* or above within the Marketing discipline (i.e journal of retailing, journal of consumer research) Other articles from Marketing journals ABS ranked 2* 2. Circa 30 articles ranked 3* or above from the field of Manufacturing and Operation 3. Sociology and pyschology journals, books, conference Papers 4. News website for market information
Search criteria	1. Keyword searches via Kingston University Library iCat, using the Business Source Premier (EBSCO) database 2. Additional material from Google Scholar
Selection criteria	1. Relevance to topic and argument 2. Articles were read, logged according to theme

After an extensive exploratory reading of the literature, the following key themes were identified, which resulted in the sections of the critical literature review: (i) consumer-perceived value; (ii) customisation and consumer-perceived value; (iii) consumer perceived value and gifting; (iv) customisation and gifting anxiety; (v) customisation and self-perceived design skill; (vi) gifting anxiety and the nature of the recipient (self vs. other); (vii) customisation perceived complexity. A personal folder was created on the Business Source Premier (EBSCO) database with all the articles sourced from the database. Some articles, more sociology and psychology than business related (e.g., Schlenker, and Leary, 1982) were found on Google Scholar. A total of circa 200 sources were collected.

Once the papers for each theme were identified, additional studies were sourced using the snowballing technique, searching specifically for authors and titles cited in reference lists and bibliographies of selected texts.

Table 3. Summary of topics and articles for the Literature Review

Themes	Fields of Literature	Key Articles
(i) Consumer perceived value	Consumer Value Literature	Vershofen (1959), Holbrook and Hirschman (1982), Zeithaml (1988), Sheth (1991), Holbrook (1994,1999), Lai (1995), Woodruff (1997), Oliver (1999), Mathwick et al. (2000), Sweeney and Soutar (2001), Walter, Ritter, and Gemünden (2001), Petrick (2002), Sánchez-Fernández et al. (2009), Gallarza et al. (2011, 2015, 2017), Lemon and Verhoef (2016), Leroi-Werelds (2019)
(ii) Customisation and Consumer-perceived value	Customisation Literature (Marketing and Manufacturing)	Pine (1993), Peppers and Rogers (1997), Pine and Gilmore (1999), Tu et al. (2001), Fiore et al. (2004), Franke and Piller (2004), Squire et al. (2004), Hedge et al. (2005), Dellaert and Stremersch (2005), Franke et al. (2009), Franke and Schreier (2006), Schreier (2006), Franke and Schreier (2008), Yue et al. (2009), Merle et al. (2010), Moreau and Herd (2010), Moreau et al. (2011),Trentin et al. (2014), Yoo and Park (2016), De Bellis et al. (2016, 2019), Sandrin et al.(2017), Franke et al. (2019), Klesse et al. (2019).
(iii) Consumer perceived value and gifting	Gift Giving Literature	Lowes et al. (1968), Belk (1979, 1988), Sherry (1983), Sherry and McGrath (1989), Caplow (1984), Cheal (1987), Fischer and Arnold (1990), Mick and DeMoss (1992), Olshavsky and Lee (1993), Robben and Verhallen (1994), Babin et al. (1994, 2007), Larsen and Watson (2001), Moreau et al. (2011), Heath et al. (2011, 2015), Givi and Galak (2017, 2019)
(iv) Customisation and gifting anxiety	Customisation Literature	Moreau et al. (2011), Bonney et al. (2011)
	Gift Giving Literature Social Anxiety Literature	Schlenker and Leary (1982), Otnes et al. (1992), Sherry et al. (1993), Cleveland et al. (2003), Babin (2007), Wooten (2000), Moreau et al. (2011), Ward and Broniarczyk (2013), Ganesh Pillai and Krishnakumar (2019)
(v) Customisation and self-perceived design skill	Customisation Literature	Moreau et al. (2011)
(vi) Gifting anxiety and the nature of the recipient	Customisation Literature	Moreau et al. (2011), Bonney et al. (2011)
	Gift Giving Literature	Pizzetti and Gibbert (2018)
(vii) Customisation Perceived Complexity	Customisation Literature Gift Giving Literature	Bardakci and Whitelock (2004) , Dellaert and Stremersch (2005), Huffman and Kahn (1998), Moreau et al. (2011), Pine (1993), Valenzuela et al. (2009), Simonson (2005), De Bellis (2016), Moreau et al. (2011, 2020)

2.3 Consumer perceived value

Consumer value is a key concept for both marketing researchers and practitioners (Cronin, Brady, and Hult, 2000). Optimal customer value is fundamental for gaining competitive advantage on the market (Lai, 1995; Woodruff, 1997). Among the extant conceptual research on value, Holbrook (1994, 1999) was a pioneer at considering value as a key aspect of the consumption experience (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Over a period of two decades, Holbrook developed and ultimately presented a typology of value (Holbrook, 1999) that has been considered *'the most comprehensive approach to the value construct, because it captures more potential sources of value than do other conceptualizations'* (Sánchez-Fernández and Iniesta-Bonillo, 2009, p. 97). Holbrook's value conceptualisation includes economic, social, hedonic, and altruistic aspects, organised into eight value types, namely, efficiency, excellence, status, esteem, play, aesthetics, ethics, and spirituality. However, despite Holbrook's contribution to the conceptual literature on consumption behavior and service experiences, there have been few attempts to operationalise and validate his work on the theory of value. Holbrook (1994, p. 22) himself highlighted that, *'despite this obvious importance of customer value to the study of marketing in general and buyer behavior in particular, consumer researchers have thus far devoted surprisingly little attention to central questions concerning the nature of value'*. Gallarza (2011) confirmed that prior research conducted on the value construct for the past 30 years has been focusing solely on the relationship between quality, price and value, which does not reflect the breath of the concept of value. The value construct has presented conceptual and methodological challenges due to its complex and multifaceted nature with different meanings among consumers (Zeithaml, 1988), practitioners (Woodruff and Gardial, 1996) but also among researchers themselves (Lai, 1995). Despite the crucial role of the 'consumer value construct' in consumer behaviour, scholars have demonstrated a lack of consistency concerning the nature of value, its characteristics, or its conceptualisation (e.g., Zeithaml, 1988; Sheth, 1991; Holbrook, 1994; 1999; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Leroi-Werelds, 2019).

Nevertheless, Gallarza *et al*., (2015, p.140) argued that *'the concept, interchangeably named 'perceived' and 'consumer' value, has been the subject of significant progress, in the last decade, towards overcoming the methodological and measurement difficulties involved in scaling and assessing it (e.g., Mathwick et al., 2001; Petrick, 2002; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001; Varshneya and Das, 2017)'*.

Gallarza *et al*., (2017) conducted a review of value typologies in prior studies from 1982 to 2017. From this review of the typologies of value, it appears that two dominant definitions of

value were identified in the extant literature. The first definition of the value construct is 'experiential value'. Customers seek value in 'experiences' which may be termed as 'experiential value' (Holbrook and Hirschman1982; Holbrook 1994, 1999). This definition is a holistic approach to value that highlights the full intricacy of the construct and considers the cognitive and affective nature of the concept of value that goes beyond the relationship between price and quality; *'I define consumer value as an interactive relativistic preference experience'* (Holbrook 1999, p. 5). Holbrook describes a consumer's experience of value as 'personal and situationally dependent' and therefore subjective. In line with Holbrook, Gallarza (2011) argues that the concept of value is multi-dimensional. It has epistemological repercussions for marketing as a discipline not only due to its economic dimension known as "transaction value", which compares price with value, but also to its psychological dimension which relates to the cognitive and emotional impact on the purchase decision. This approach to value is therefore highly subjective, it compares hedonic vs. utilitarian, functional vs. emotional, cognitive and affective value of a service or a product (e.g., Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holbrook, 1994, 1999; Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Mathwick, Malhotra, and Rigdon, 2001; Gallarza *et al.,* 2011, 2017; Leroi-Werelds, 2019).

The second definition of value is the *'costs vs. benefits trade-off'* approach, meaning, *'the consumer's overall assessment of the utility of a product is based on the perceptions of what is received and what is given'* (Zeithaml, 1988, p. 8). This widely adopted approach refers to a *'trade-off between multiple benefits and sacrifices'* (Walter, Ritter, and Gemünden, 2001, p. 366), *'perceived benefits/perceived price'* (Liljander and Strandvik, 1993, p.35), and a *'positive function of what is received as a negative function of what is sacrified'* (Oliver 1999, p. 45). According to Gallarza *et al.* (2017), this definition is often unidimensional. There is also a lack of consensus among authors on the number and nature of costs and benefits.

Both definitions of value are relevant to this research. The 'experiential value' approach is relevant to the identification of the different value dimensions of the experience of customising a product. Additionally, the costs vs. benefits trade-off approach (Zeithaml 1988) is relevant to assessing the positive and negative aspects of the customisation experience. Is it worth making the effort to customise a gift for oneself or for a friend instead of purchasing a standard product?

The following section summarises how the literature has examined and attempted to identify the dimensions of perceived consumer value and the trade-offs associated with the customisation experience.

2.4 Customisation and consumer perceived value

2.4.1 Utilitarian and experiential benefits of customisation

The trade-offs offered by mass customisation have first been discussed in the literature from the operational management's point of view (Pine, 1993; Tu, Vondermbse, and Ragu-Nathan, 2001). Pine (1993) described 'mass-customisation' as reducing and ideally eliminating the trade-offs between customisation and manufacturing efficiency. In this context, the benefits of customisation include quality conformance, price, delivery times, and delivery reliability to ensure customisation –performance trade-off. However, providing efficient customisation is not sufficient *per se.* The consumer perceived-value is a key aspect of the success of mass-customisation (Merle *et al.,* 2010). Squire *et al.* (2004) designed the 'response agility tool' to analyse value resulting from several types of customisation from the customer's point of view. In this context, value provided by customisation resulted from a trade-off between perceived costs and perceived benefits to the consumer.

Although customisation provides various sources of value to the consumer, few studies on mass customisation have focused on utilitarian value, which evaluates the degree to which a customised product matches consumer preferences (Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005). Hirschman and Holbrook's (1982) and Pine and Gilmore's (1999) studies established that consumers have desire for 'experience' rather than just gaining utilitarian benefits from products (e.g., Verhoef *et al.,* 2009; Lemon and Verhoef, 2016; Gallarza *et al.,* 2017, Leroi-Werelds, 2019). For example, in the context of fashion, Fiore, Lee, and Kunz (2004) focused on the motivation factors behind customisation and concluded that the motivation behind customisation is the exciting experience of creating a unique fashion product. They stated that to create an experience, a business must engage customers in an enjoyable and unforgettable event during the sale of a product and while providing a service. Franke and Piller (2004) went one step further and actually measured through real auctions the value increment for customised (as opposed to standard) products. They showed that customers' willingness to pay premium (WTP) when designing their own watches with design toolkits exceeded 100%. In a related study, Schreier (2006) used the Vickrey auction, which is a type of sealed bid auction developed by Vickrey in 1961. Using this method, Schreier compared bidding between standard and customised product and concluded that Franke and Piller's (2004) preliminary findings on the willingness to pay premium prices for self-designed products encompass other products such as cell phone covers, T-shirts, and scarves. Importantly, Schreier (2006) discussed the sources of the benefits that are likely to explain this considerable willingness to pay a considerable premium for customised products. The author

measured four benefits provided by mass customisation: functional benefit, perceived uniqueness, the process benefit of self-design, and "pride of authorship". More recently, Franke, Keinz, and Steger (2009) confirmed that successful customisation programs such as "Nike ID" do deliver positive benefits to consumers Finally, Merle *et al.,* (2010) developed the Consumer-Perceived Value Tool (CPVT), to measure the benefits identified by Schreier (2006). The CPVT is discussed in the next section.

2.4.2 The Consumer-Perceived Value Tool (CPVT)

Merle *et al.,* (2010) distinguished five benefits of mass customisation from the consumer's viewpoint rather than from an operations management perspective (Hedge *et al.* 2005; Yue *et al.* 2009). The five benefits of customisation identified by Merle *et al.,* (2010) are more comprehensive than Schreier's (2006) typology and comprise two types of benefits: those provided by the mass-customised product itself (utilitarian value, uniqueness attributes and self-expressiveness) and those provided by the customisation experience (hedonic value and creative achievement value). To measure these benefits, Merle *et al.,* (2010) developed the Consumer-Perceived Value Tool (CPVT), following the scale development procedure set by Churchill (1979) and further developed by Gerbing and Anderson (1988).

Table 4. The Five Perceived Benefits of Mass customisation from a Consumer Viewpoint: Definitions

Perceived benefit	Definition
Mass-customized product value	
Utilitarian value	Value acquired from the closeness of fit between product characteristics and individual preferences
Uniqueness value	Value acquired from the opportunity to assert personal uniqueness using the customized product
Self-expressiveness value	Value derived from the opportunity to possess a product that is a reflection of personality
Codesign process value	
Hedonic value	Value acquired from the experience's capacity to meet needs related to enjoyment, fun, or pleasure
Creative achievement value	Value acquired from the feeling of accomplishment related to the creative task of codesigning

Source: Merle, A., Chandon, J.L, Roux, E., Alizon, F. (2010) 'Perceived Value of the Mass-Customized Product and Mass Customization Experience for Individual Consumers', *Production and Operations Management*, 19(5), pp. 503–514.

The first dimension of perceived value in the Consumer Perceived Value Tool (CPVT) is utilitarian value, which relates to the extent to which a mass-customised product corresponds to the consumer's aesthetic and functional preferences (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Peppers

and Rogers 1997). The second value component is the uniqueness value (Snyder, 1992; Tian *et al.,* 2001). Fiore, Lee, and Kunz*,* (2004) established that the desire to obtain a unique product is one of the motivations behind taking part in a customisation program. Franke and Schreier (2008) identified a positive impact of the perceived uniqueness of a mass-customised product on the utility consumers derive from mass customisation. The third component, self-expressiveness value, originates from Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy, 1982) and corresponds to the benefit of owning a product that reflects one's own image, regardless of whether the consumer wants to assert their identity. Customisation provides an opportunity for consumers to possess products that express their personalities since they can choose from different options. Self-expressiveness value differs from uniqueness value. The individuals are not trying to show their difference compared to others but instead seeks to own a product that corresponds to their self-image. Klesse *et al.*, (2019) observed that customisation influences the consumer's perception of product's attributes. The authors coined this phenomenon 'self-image-consistent product perceptions'. The consumer perceives the product in line with their own self-image. Furthermore, Grewal *et al.,* (2019) highlighted that consumer are keen to view themselves positively and use the signalling value of products to preserve a positive view of themselves.

The customisation experience provides two more perceived benefits: hedonic value (Fiore, Lee, and Kunz*,* 2004; Franke and Schreier, 2006) and creative achievement value. Hedonic value entails the joy and entertainment derived from the experience. This is consistent with Fiore, Lee, and Kunz's (2004) findings concerning the link between wanting to have an exciting experience and the willingness to use a mass customisation program. In addition, Franke and Schreier (2006) had shown that hedonic value significantly influences the willingness to pay a premium price for mass customisation. Creative achievement value conveys Schreier's (2006) 'pride of authorship' concept which describes the self-rewarding creative process of customisation. The 'I designed it myself' effect in mass customisation was investigated further by Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser*,* (2010). The authors suggested that designers of customisation programs should take into account that feelings of accomplishment provided by the customisation process impact the subjective value of the product greatly. However, more recently, Moreau *et al.*'s (2020) research on luxury brands highlighted the presence of an *'inherent tension between consumers' desire for self-expression and their desire to signal status in the market for customized luxury goods'* (p. 945). The authors suggested that freedom to customise should not be taken too far to avoid eroding the brand's luxury image.

Increasing the benefits gained from a mass- customisation experience is key to augmenting the consumer's willingness to pay and, ultimately, the value of mass customisation from the

manufacturer's perspective. However, consumers' perceived benefits arising from the customisation experience may be dependent upon the design of the customisation webpage. For instance, Trentin, Perrin, and Forza (2014) assert that the hedonic and creative achievement benefits provided by the customisation experience increase with the enhanced provision by a sales configurator of the following features: focused navigation, flexible navigation, user-friendly product space description, easy comparison, and benefit-cost communication.

More recently, Merle *et al.*'s Consumer Perceived Value Tool (CPVT) was used by Yoo and Park (2016) to examine the determinants of satisfaction for the customisation of a luxury product. The authors studied the impact of four value dimensions from the CPVT (hedonic, utilitarian, self-expressiveness, and creative achievement value) on the satisfaction construct. The authors also added the effect of social value as a value dimension on satisfaction. According to past studies, luxury products as opposed to non-luxury products, relate to the desire to impress others, to build a favorable social image (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004), and to display their social status. Moreover, Yoo and Park (2016) also established that the relationship between consumer value and satisfaction differs depending on the consumer's past loyalty and need for uniqueness. However, contrary to Merle *et al.*'s (2010) findings, self-expressive value is not identified as a key dimension of customisation value in the specific context of luxury brands. The authors concluded that the selected value dimensions influenced the satisfaction conferred by customisation, which in turn influenced brand loyalty.

Further, Yoo and Park's (2016) study is an attempt to generalise the consumer-perceived value tool (CPVT) to other contexts and cultures. However, one can argue that the generalisability of this study remains limited since it only concerns the online luxury market in Korea. Furthermore, the dimensions of the consumer's perceived value gained in the customisation process were not considered in the context of gift giving. To the author's best knowledge, Merle *et al.*'s (2010) Consumer Value Perceived Tool has only been used to identify and measure consumer perceived value in the context of customisation for oneself and not for a recipient. It is therefore not clear whether the five identified benefits bestowed by customisation would apply when customising a gift for a recipient. The Consumer Value Perceived Tool needs to be tested in the situation of gifting.

2.4.3 Additional value dimension in the context of gift customisation: social value

As mentioned earlier, the Consumer Perceived-Value Tool (Merle *et al.,* 2010) was only used in the context of customisation for oneself and not in the context of gift giving.

Consequently, some additional benefits could be perceived when the consumer customises a product for a recipient. For instance, the giver could potentially perceive social value thanks to the recipient's satisfaction expressed when receiving the customised gift (Sheth, 1991; Larsen and Watson 2001). Gifts convey meaning and the value of the gift goes beyond its economic or functional purpose. As Larsen and Watson (2001, p.894) assert, *'the social value of a gift is derived from the symbolic representation of the tie between two social entities provided by the gift'*.

Areni, Kiecker, and Palan (1988) refers to the 'sacrifice', meaning the investment of thought and effort a giver makes in creating or refining a special object. Prior research has shown that the greater the behavioral costs to select or produce the gift, the more recipients value the gift (Robben and Verhallen, 1994). Personally made presents involving "psychic costs" of the giver are more appreciated by recipients than pre-wrapped gifts "picked" on a shelf of a store (Larsen and Watson, 2001). These findings are particularly relevant to the gift customisation context. By making the effort of creating a gift for a special person rather than purchasing a standard present in a shop, the consumer seeks social approval and expects a higher satisfaction from the receiver (Larsen and Watson, 2001). Consequently, the giver could perceive social value in anticipation to the recipient's satisfaction expressed when receiving the customised gift (Sheth, 1991; Larsen and Watson, 2001). Social value can also be perceived in the context of self-gift giving thanks to the recognition by others of the effort put into the design of a product rather than purchasing a ready-made one in a shop.

Social value is identified in Sheth's (1991) 'A Theory of Consumption Values', when investigating the reasons why we buy what we buy. *'Products have been known to possess symbolic or conspicuous consumption value in excess of their functional utility'* (Sheth, 1991, p.161). The author posits that choices involving highly visible goods to be shared with others such as gifts are often driven by social value. Building on Sheth's research, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) later developed a "consumer value scale" with social value as one of the items defined as 'utility derived from product's ability to enhance the self-concept' (p. 211).

Social value can be considered as a relevant dimension of consumer value bestowed by customisation in the context of both interpersonal and self-gift giving. Consequently, based on the above literature, social value could be considered as an additional value perceived by the consumer when customising a gift. It could be the sixth benefit complementing the five benefits already identified by Merle *et al.* (2010).

The following section examines the presence of the concept of consumer perceived value in the gifting literature at large (self-gift giving vs. interpersonal gift giving) as well as in the specific context of customisation.

2.5 Consumer Perceived Value and Gifting

A seminal study in gift giving literature is the anthropological analysis of Sherry (1983) who suggested that gift giving has social, economic, and personal dimensions. Sherry studied the link between the nature of the gift, the relationship between giver and recipient, and situational conditions. Belk (1979) identified four purposes of gift giving: to mark important events, to establish and maintain relationships, as a medium of economic exchange and to socialise children into the customs of society. Gift giving usually occur on happy, celebratory occasions (Lowes, Turner, and Wills, 1968). Givi and Galak (2021) demonstrated that contrary to occasion-based gifts, a recipient's happiness level is higher when receiving non-occasion-based gifts, varying little with gift quality. Recently, Givi *et al*. (2022) conducted an integrative review of gift-giving research in consumer behaviour and marketing providing a single point of reference for gift-giving scholars.

In the context of self-gift giving, the literature has identified two therapeutic and reward key purposes for self-gift behaviour, namely 'to cheer up oneself when feeling down' and 'to reward oneself for an accomplishment' (Mick and DeMoss, 1992; Olshavsky and Lee, 1993; Heath, Tynan, and Ennew, 2011). The therapeutic value of self-gifts is described as a means of feeling better (Mick and DeMoss, 1992). Both self-gifting and interpersonal gift-giving reflect a hedonic form of consumption. Value is indeed a key element of the gifting experience (Larsen and Watson 2001). Similar to customisation, gift giving creates hedonic and utilitarian value for the consumer (e.g., Caplow, 1984; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007). Sherry and McGrath (1989) identify a 'ludic' characteristic to gift shopping. Additionally, Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts (2007) make a distinction between gift shopping hedonic value, derived from the 'thrill of the hunt', or the "enjoyment" resulting from finding "the" perfect gift, and gift shopping utilitarian value provided by the outcome of the shopping experience, such as efficient product acquisition. Recently, Grossman and Rahinel (2022) highlighted than in the specific context of gift giving heirlooms, the primary motive of the giver is to inspire their offspring to strive for accomplishments in their own right.

However, no prior study has been conducted on the dimensionality of the consumer-perceived value of gifting (self-gift giving and interpersonal gift giving) in the specific context of customisation. For instance, while Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) research established that consumers place a higher value on the efforts put into the design of a customised product when it is intended as a gift, they did not actually identify and measure the dimensions of perceived value that motivate consumers to customise gifts. Value is a key construct of gift customisation. Therefore, the positive and negative aspects that may affect value dimensions perceived by the consumer during the customisation should be examined. The lack of consideration of the dimensions of perceived value in the context of gift customisation is a shortcoming in extant research, also in consideration of the evidence that the first reason why consumers want personalisation is that 'customized products make great gifts' (Deloitte, 2015). Therefore, it is important to understand consumers' motivations when customising gifts in order to maximise the benefits provided by the experience and the dimensions of consumers' perceived value when customising a gift.

As stated above, previous studies in the customisation and gifting literature showed that both customisation and gifting provide value to the consumers. However, gifting also comes with its challenges including stress and anxiety which is expected to be exacerbated in the context of customisation.

2.6 Customisation and gifting anxiety

The analysis of extant research reveals that, similarly to customisation, gifting does provide value to the giver (e.g., Caplow, 1984; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Babin, Darden, and Griffin, 1994; Larsen and Watson, 2001; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007; Givi and Galak, 2017). However, according to Larsen and Watson (2009), gift giving provides excitement, satisfaction, and extreme pleasure, but it provokes also stress, anxiety, and disappointment.

In addition to financial costs, gift giving implies investment of time and psychic efforts (Robben and Verhallen, 1994). Gift-giving leads consumers to consider a wider range of options, to browse more shops, to request more advice from vendors and others (Grønhaug, 1972; Clarke and Belk, 1979). More recently, Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts (2007, p. 896) qualify gift shopping as an *'arduous task'*.

Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) study referred to Wooten's findings on gifting anxiety and extended the theory to the context of customisation. They posit that in the context of customisation for a recipient, gifting anxiety comes in addition to perceived complexity

provided by customising. Giving a customised gift rather than a gift picked from the shelf is supposed to make the recipient feel 'more special' or, in the context of self- gift giving, to reward oneself in a 'special way'. The aim of making a "good impression" on the recipient (interpersonal gift giving) or feel good about themselves (self-gift giving), must be deeper if the giver decides to put extra efforts into customising a gift. Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) conclude that givers place higher value on their effort when designing a gift. Belk (1996, p.61) asserts that *'a perfect gift is one that the giver made a sacrifice to provide'*. Therefore, one can expect that when customising, consumers may put more pressure on themselves, and hence feel more anxious during the customisation process but also at the moment of giving the customised gift. The fact that a customised gift means that the giver presents a gift he has created himself, with more personal involvement than choosing a standard product, may entail a greater feeling of anxiety.

Customising a gift implies more than just gift shopping and gift giving, it means, 'gift creating' for another person or for oneself. As a result, it would be important to study the dimensionality of gifting anxiety in the context of customisation and how it may affect the consumer perceived value during the process. Based on the literature reviewed so far, it is plausible to expect that anxiety may be substantial in the context of customisation. However, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) highlighted the fact that this anxiety may fluctuate according to the level of self- perceived design skill of the person who customises the gift.

2.7 Customisation and self-perceived design skill

The interface between manufacturers and customers is known as a mass customisation toolkit. These toolkits reduce the level of skill necessary to design a product oneself, as easy-to-use design tools are provided. The process of physical production is then left to the manufacturer (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser, 2010).

Even with the facilities provided by customisation tool kits, the process of self-designing a product and the effort involved may impact the customer's willingness to use a mass customisation (MC) toolkit and increase the likelihood of abandoning the customisation process without actually buying the product (Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). A key factor in determining whether or not the customisation process is completed is an individual's 'self-perceived design skill' (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) did examine the role of self-perceived design skill in the context of customising for oneself vs. for others. The authors highlighted that when

customising for others, the consumer does not have access to the recipient's preferences and must predict them, which can cause stress and anxiety. The results of their study suggest that design support and self-perceived design skill are moderators of this anxiety in both contexts. The findings revealed that design support, together with self-perceived design skill, decreased anxiety and raised product expectations when participants were designing products as gifts but not for themselves.

Therefore, the impact of self-perceived design skill on anxiety and customisation value, in the absence of design support, would be worth further examination, in the context of either self-giving or gift giving.

2.8 Gifting anxiety and the nature of the recipient (self vs. others)

Past research stated that both value and anxiety are experienced during the customisation experience. A salient distinction needs to be made regarding the context of the gift customisation. The nature of the recipient of the customised gift, oneself vs. others, is expected to influence the perceived anxiety as well as its impact on the customisation benefits. Based on the gifting literature, interpersonal gift giving seems to be more challenging that self-gift giving because the stakes in the gifting process can be high.

Two major factors are contributing to anxiety during gift giving. Firstly, the lack of familiarity with the recipient's preferences can be causing stress to the giver (Wooten, 2000, p.92) and the second contributor is social anxiety. *Social anxiety appears when people 'are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success'* (Wooten, 2000, p.85). Based on the work on social anxiety by psychology scholars Schlenker and Leary (1982), this type of anxiety has been later investigated in the context of gift giving and was coined 'gifting anxiety' (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993; Otnes, Kim, and Lowrey, 1992).

Sherry, McGrath, and Levy's (1993) research 'The dark of the Gift', examined sources of gifting anxiety due to unattainable expectations that recipients impose on givers, creating stress. Inappropriate gifts can cause embarrassment to both giver and recipient, damaging the social relationship. Based on the insights of Sherry, McGrath, and Levy (1993) and Otnes, Kim, and Lowrey (1992) on the nature and sources of gifting anxiety, Wooten (2000) later identified the necessity to theorise further the experience of gift-anxiety and *'to broaden our understanding of the antecedents of gifting anxiety by exploring the factors that precipitate anxious moments'* (Wooten 2000, p.84). Hence, Wooten developed an expanded model of anxiety in gift giving based on impression management theory (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)

and Sherry, McGrath, and Levy's (1993) past research on gifting anxiety and self-presentation. Wooten discovered new antecedents that precipitate gift-giving anxiety such as characteristics of recipients, givers and gift situations. The discovery of new antecedents of impression efficacy: formality and perfectionism as well as the connection of gifting anxiety to social anxiety contributed to both impression management and gift giving literature.

Many studies conducted on the subject focus on the negative side of gift-purchase compared with self-purchase. Purchasing a gift is a more 'involving' task than self-purchasing (Belk 1982) and may generate greater levels of anxiety to the giver. Previous literature showed that customisation for oneself was difficult for consumers due to 'lack of insight into their own preferences' (Simonson, 2005). Nevertheless, gift giving typically involves greater uncertainty than choosing something for self-use because recipients may have different preferences (Cleveland *et al.*, 2003). Furthermore, gifts may represent symbols of a relationship: *'A gift is a ritual offering that is a sign of involvement in and connectedness to another'* (Cheal, 1987, p. 152). Customising a gift requires an even deeper involvement from the giver than giving a standard gift, as he/she needs to make multiple choices on behalf of the recipient without the knowledge or assurance of the recipient's preferences. Recently, Givi and Galak (2017) highlighted that givers do not give sentimentally valuable gifts as often as recipients would like; this appears to be the result of givers feeling relatively uncertain about whether sentimentally valuable gifts will be appreciated by recipients. Sherry, McGrath, and Levy (1993, p.237) posit that *'gifts create internal stress by requiring an examination of the canons of propriety and a negotiation of identity: imputation and resistance of inauthentic versions of the self are critical elements of this stress'*. This statement suggests that the human's need to manage impressions lies at the core of gifting anxiety and therefore gift giving may be more stressful than self-gift giving.

Another facet of gifting anxiety is 'identity threat' (Ward and Broniarczyk, 2013). Prior research showed that consumers are inclined to purchase identity- consistent products. Gifts become *'containers for the being of the donor who gives a portion of that being to the recipient'* (Sherry 1983, p.159). Ward and Broniarczyk's (2013) research extend consumer identity research to the context of gift giving, in which consumers may make product choices contrary to their own identities with the aim of fulfilling the desires of the intended recipient. However, the authors demonstrated that purchasing an identity-contrary gift for a friend who is an integral part of the self can cause an identity threat to the giver. *'Individuals are motivated to present themselves accurately to close others and feel threatened when they engage in incongruous*

behaviors, such as presenting a gift that is not self-reflective' (Ward and Broniarczyk, 2013, p.272).

In summary, the gifting literature demonstrates that the gifting process is not such an easy task, particularly in the context of interpersonal gift giving, due to social anxiety and impression management. Based on extant literature, purchasing a gift is a more stressful than self-purchasing (Belk, 1982; Wooten, 2000; Ganesh Pillai and Krishnakumar, 2019). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) demonstrated that consumers customising a bag for a recipient needed design support to decrease their perceived anxiety during the customisation task.

Besides the salience of the nature of the gift recipient (self vs. others), an additional factor that merits attention in this research on gift customisation is the potential influence of the complexity perceived by the consumer during the customisation experience. This is discussed in the following section.

2.9 Customisation and Perceived Complexity

As evident from the review of the literature so far, an extensive body of research has shown that the process of customisation generates value to the consumer (e.g., Fiore, Lee, and Kunz, 2004; Franke and Schreier, 2010; Merle *et al.,* 201; Trentin, Perrin, and Forza*,* 2014; Yoo and Park, 2016), and a higher willingness to pay (Franke and Piller, 2004; Schreier, 2006; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009). However, not all consumers find the purchase of customised products desirable, as shown by the evidence that, in practice, most consumers still purchase standard off-the-shelf products (Bardakci and Whitelock, 2004). The authors conducted an empirical study to examine how far customers are "ready" for mass-customised products. They found that the main perceived problem with mass customisation is the increased price, even for 'ready' customers. Only 58% of the participants claimed to be willing to pay a slight premium for a customised car.

Moreover, customising a product is a more demanding activity than buying a standard product. Customisation implies more personal involvement from the consumer since he/she is part of the creative process as co-designer. Besides, the countless set of options offered to the consumer during the customisation process can generate choice complexity (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005) and lead to 'mass confusion' (Pine, 1993; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). As stated in section 2.7, the process of self-designing a product and the effort involved may impact the consumer's willingness to use a customisation program and increase the likelihood of abandoning the customisation process without actually buying the product (Dellaert and

Stemersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). This choice complexity can therefore create a certain degree of anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009).

Furthermore, the assumption that customisation creates value since customised products give a closer preference fit, implies that the consumer knows exactly what he wants. Nevertheless, prior studies show that, even in the context of self-gift giving, often consumers actually *'lack insight into their own preferences'* as suggested by behavioural decision theory (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009, p.761; Simonson, 2005).

Franke, Keinz, and Steger (2009) conducted an empirical study demonstrating that the benefits of customised products are higher only if consumers have insight on their own preferences, have the ability to express them and have great product involvement. The lack of insight on preferences can have consequences on the benefits provided to the consumer since Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer (2009) posited that a negative perception of the customisation experience does impact the purchase intention of the customised product. Therefore, according to extant literature, the customisation process can lead to perceived complexity in both contexts of interpersonal gift giving and of self-gift giving. More recently, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) did compare the perceived complexity in the context of customising for oneself vs. others, but they did not assess the impact of perceived complexity on the consumer's anxiety, nor on the value dimensions conferred by the gift customisation process.

In summary, the literature suggests that customising a gift will always be more challenging than purchasing a standard gift given the additional requirements in creating a product and the lack of confidence into oneself or others' preferences.

2.10 Outcomes of conceptual frameworks in the literature

Following a review of the customisation literature, the most common outcomes are the 'willingness to pay a premium for a customised product' (Franke and Piller, 2004; Bardakci and Whitelock, 2004; Franke and Schreier, 2006), and 'product satisfaction' (Huffman and Kahn 1998; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011). Prior research on gift giving has focused on the study of the 'value of the gift giving experience' (Larsen and Watson, 2001), 'level of gift giving anxiety' (Wooten, 2000) or 'likelihood to give sentimentally valuable gifts vs. preference-matching gifts' (Givi and Galak, 2017). Table 5 below summarises these streams of literature.

Table 5. Outcomes of conceptual frameworks in the literature

LITERATURE	OUTCOMES
CUSTOMISATION	
Huffman, C. and Kahn, B. E. (1998)	Product Satisfaction
Franke N. and Piller F.T. (2003)	Impact of satisfaction with the co-design process on satisfaction with the customized product
Bardakci, A. and Whitelock, J. (2004)	WTP* premium
Franke N. and Piller F.T. (2004)	WTP premium
Franke N. and Schreier M. (2006)	WTP premium
Franke N. and Schreier M. (2006)	WTP premium
Schreier M. (2006)	WTP premium
Merle, A., Chandon, J. and Roux, E. (2008)	**Purchase intention**
Valenzuela, A., Dhar, R. and Zettelmeyer, F. (2009)	Choice Satisfaction and Intention to Purchase customised product
Moreau, C. P., Bonney, L. and Herd, K. B. (2011)	Product Satisfaction and Willingness to Pay
Yoo, J. and Park, M. (2016)	Product Satisfaction and Loyalty
Moreau et al. (2020)	**Purchase intention of customised product**
GIFT GIVING	
Sherry Jr., J. F. and McGrath, M. A. and Levy, S. J. (1993)	Qualitative paper: elaboration upon instances of negativity and ambivalence in the gift exchange process.
Robben, H.S.J. and Verhallen, T.M.M. (1994)	Effects of behavioral prices and behavioral budgets on cost perception and preference for gifts to receive and gifts to give.
Wooten, D. B. (2000)	Gift Giving anxiety
Larsen, D., and Watson, J. J. (2001)	Value of the gift giving experience
Babin, B.J., Gonzalez, C. and Watts, C. (2007)	Gift shopping value and satisfaction
Givi, J. and Galak, J. (2017)	Likelihood to give sentimentally valuable gifts vs. preference-matching gifts

* WTP = Willingness To Pay a premium for a customised product

40

In the field of customisation, Merle, Chandon and Roux (2008) investigated the impact of the overall value of mass customisation on purchase intention. More recently, Moreau *et al.* (2020) examined how design freedom influences purchase intention of customised luxury products. Based on this past research, 'purchase intention of the customised product' is the selected outcome of the conceptual framework of the current study aiming at the investigation of the effect of the value dimensions of customisation on purchase intention of the customised product, as well as the antecedents of the customisation perceived value (anxiety and self-perceived design skill).

2.11. Literature Review Conclusions

The literature review suggests that extensive research has been conducted on the benefits and challenges bestowed by customisation and gifting respectively. Past research showed that both customisation (e.g., Franke and Piller, 2004; Schreier, 2006; Franke, Keinz, and Steger*, 2009; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Yoo and Park, 2016; Aichner *et al.,* 2019) and gifting provide value to the consumers (e.g., Caplow, 1984; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Babin, Darden, and Griffin*, 1994; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007; Givi and Galak, 2017). However, both the customisation experience and gifting also present challenges for the consumer. Given the vast set of options offered to the consumer during the customisation process, co-designing a product can lead to perceived complexity (Pine, 1993; Huffman and Kahn, 1998) and even anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011, Moreau *et al.,* 2020). These feelings may affect the customisation experience. The confidence of the consumer in their design skill, i.e., self-perceived design skill, may also alter the level of perceived anxiety during customisation and impact the value conferred by the customisation (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd 2011).

In the interpersonal gifting context, the fact that the giver may have different preferences to recipients (Cleveland *et al.,* 2003; Givi and Galak 2017, 2019) and, in the self-gift giving scenario, that individuals may be unsure about their own preferences (Simonson, 2005) might aggravate the negative emotions experienced during the gift customisation process (Wooten, 2000; Bonney, Herd and Moreau, 2011; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Moreau *et al.,* 2020).

Finally, an additional layer of complexity relates to the specific context of the gift customisation. The giver's perceived amount of anxiety and its impact on the value dimensions may vary depending on the recipient, i.e., whether the gift is customised as a gift to oneself or for someone else (Bonney, Herd and Moreau, 2011; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Moreau

*et al.,*2020). However, it is apparent that few studies have examined the effects of the positive and negative aspects of customisation in the specific context of gifting.

This thesis contributes particularly to the following two studies that helped identify the research gaps presented in section 2.12: Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Merle *et al.* (2010). Both studies relate to the same constructs of self-perceived design skill and anxiety in the context of gift customisation (self vs. other). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) mention that during gift customisation, consumers perceive both complexity and anxiety. However, the actual effect of complexity on anxiety has not yet been measured in this specific context (**Gap 1**). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) investigated the role of self-perceived design skill on anxiety in the presence of design support. This relationship does not seem to have ever been analysed in the absence of design support (**Gap 2**). Furthermore, whilst Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) investigated the effect of anxiety on product expectation, satisfaction and willingness to pay, neither its effect nor the impact of self-perceived design skill, on the value dimensions emanating from gift customisation and indirectly on purchase intention of the customised gift have ever been examined **(Gaps 3, 4).** The present thesis also complements Merle *et al.*'s (2010) study. Their scale of value dimensions from customisation has not yet been applied to the context of gifting (self vs. other). Moreover, the impact of the value dimensions and social value on purchase intention of the customised gift does not seem to have been investigated in the literature (**Gap 5**). Finally, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) studied gift customisation for oneself vs. other but the role of the nature of the recipient on the positive (self-perceived design skill) and negative aspects of gift customisation (perceived complexity and anxiety) has not been explored so far by the literature (**Gap 6**).

2.12. Identified Research Gaps and Theoretical Contribution

Therefore, according to the conclusions of the critical literature review, **six** gaps in knowledge merit further investigation. The thesis contributions to theory are presented in detail in section 6.2.

In preamble of the next Chapter where these research gaps will be discussed, the six gaps and their contribution to theory are summarised as follows: the **first** gap in the literature is the lack of knowledge about the effect of perceived complexity on perceived anxiety during the gift customisation experience. The **second** gap is the absence of past investigation of the impact of self-perceived design skill on the anxiety felt while customising. The effort to reduce these two gaps will contribute to 'Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory' (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993)

and 'Impression Management Theory' (Goffman, 1959) by providing knowledge about the effect of both complexity and self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety in gift customisation.

The **third** gap in prior literature is the lack of previous analysis of the effect of perceived anxiety and **fourth** of self-perceived design skill on the six value dimensions provided by gift customisation. The attempt to reduce these two gaps will offer a better understanding of the negative impact (i.e., anxiety) on value and as such contribute to 'Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory' and 'Impression Management Theory'. Also, the analysis of the positive effect (i.e., self-perceived design skill) on value dimensions will contribute to 'Benefit Theory' (Vershofen, 1959) by advancing knowledge about the impact on the functional, but also social and psychological benefits of customising a gift.

The **fifth** gap is the shortcoming in extant research on the impact of each of the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation on the purchase intention of the customised gift. By offering a deeper understanding of the complexity of the psychology behind the consumer's decision process during the gift customisation experience and confirming that subjective values impact purchase decision, the findings will contribute to 'Theory of Consumption Value' (Sheth 1991) and 'Behavioural Decision Theory' (Edwards, 1954).

Finally, the **sixth** gap identified in the literature review is the lack of analysis of the moderating effect of the nature of the recipient (self vs. others) on all the hypothesised relationships. The results of this investigation will contribute to 'Gift Giving Anxiety Theory' by ascertaining whether or not consumers feel more anxiety when customising for themselves or others. In sum, by narrowing these six gaps in the literature, this thesis will contribute to a better understanding of the consumer's behaviour and psychology during their customisation journey.

Chapter 3. Conceptual Framework

3.1. Introduction

The critical review of the literature identified the complex network of relationships among variables relevant to answer the research questions. The literature review sets the foundation for the development of the conceptual framework, a key stage in the process of conducting deductive research.

Before the complex network of relationships illustrated in the framework is explained and research hypotheses are developed, the research objectives and the theoretical contributions of the study are presented.

3.2. Research objectives

As highlighted in the literature review, the customisation experience does not solely provide benefits to consumers; it also involves challenges and costs such as perceived complexity and anxiety. Whilst benefits and challenges associated with customisation have been examined in past literature for consumers customising for themselves, limited research has been conducted on customisation in the context of gifting, both self-gift giving and interpersonal gift-giving.

Consequently, the aim of this research is to investigate the effects of the positive and negative aspects of customisation on value in the context of gifting (self vs. other). The research enhances the understanding of the perceived value of customising products. Most importantly, the study sheds light onto the ambivalence between benefits and challenges provided by the experience of customising a gift.

To meet the overall aim, the following objectives have been set:

1. Investigate the impact of perceived complexity on the anxiety perceived during the gift customisation process.
2. Examine the impact of self-perceived design skill on the anxiety perceived during the gift customisation process.
3. Study the effect of perceived anxiety on the value dimensions provided by gift customisation.
4. Investigate the impact of self-perceived design skill on each of the six dimensions of consumer's perceived value bestowed by the customisation experience in the context of gifting.

5. Examine the effect of each of the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation on the purchase intention of the customised gift.

6. Examine the effect of the nature of the recipient (self vs. others) on all the hypothesised relationships.

3.3 Theories underpinning the research

Given the above objectives, this study contributes to knowledge in the domains of consumer value, customisation and gifting. Specifically, the study aims to understand the psychological processes underlying gift customisation through the lens of the following underpinning theories: Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth, 1991), Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy, 1982), Benefit Theory (Vershofen, 1959), Behavioural Theory (Edwards, 1954), and Gift Giving Anxiety (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993; Wooten, 2000) which finds its roots in Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959).

Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth, 1991)

By increasing our understanding of the dimensions of consumer value in the context of gift customisation, the present study advances knowledge in the area of consumer value (Gallarza, 2017) and contribute to Sheth's (1991) 'Theory of Consumption Values' relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour. The application of Sheth's theory aiming at a better understanding of 'why we buy what we buy' through a Theory of Consumption Values is extended to the context of gift customisation. Eventually, this thesis investigates the relationship between the value dimensions of gift customisation and 'purchase intention'. Since the focus of this thesis are the dimensions of consumer value and their antecedents, the 'Theory of Consumption Values' is the overarching theory of the research.

Benefit Theory (Vershofen, 1959)

Benefit Theory explains that products carry not only functional benefits but also social and psychological benefits. Functional benefits relate to the utilitarian value of a product, whilst additional benefits relate to attributes that are not directly related to the product's function, such as the social and psychological benefits provided to the consumer after or while using a product (Valtin, 2005).

Benefit Theory underpins the present study. Indeed, as per Merle *et al.*'s (2010) findings, the value dimensions from customisation can be categorised as such: the 'functional' benefits provided by the customised product (utility, uniqueness and self-expressiveness) and the 'social and psychological' benefits provided by the customisation experience (hedonic value and creative achievement value). However, to the author's knowledge, this theory has never been examined in the context of gift customisation. Consequently, by increasing knowledge about the dimensions of consumer benefits in gift customisation, the intended research extends the application of Benefit Theory (Vershofen, 1959) to a new field.

Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy, 1982)

One of the benefits of customisation identified by Merle *et al.,* (2010) is self-expressiveness value, which comes from 'Self-Concept Theory'. This value dimension corresponds to the benefit of owning a product that reflects one's own image. Customisation provides an opportunity for consumers to create products that express their personalities since they can choose from among several options matching their preferences.

Departing from Self-Concept Theory, Klesse *et al.,* (2019) recently observed that consumers perceive products in line with their own self-image. They coined this phenomenon 'self-image-consistent product perceptions'. Moreover, Grewal *et al.,* (2019) established that since consumers are keen to view themselves positively, they use the signalling value of products to preserve a positive view of themselves.

The proposed study contributes to a better understanding of Self-Concept Theory by extending for the first time its application to the context of gift customisation, for the purpose of either self-gifting or interpersonal gifting. In this new context, Self-Concept Theory could be linked to Sherry's research and confirm their assertion that by designing it themselves, gifts become *'containers for the being of the donor who gives a portion of that being to the recipient'* (1983, p.159). This statement is even more relevant in the context of customisation, since the gift is "created" by the consumers themselves, choosing among options reflecting their personal tastes in the self and interpersonal gifting contexts.

Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954)

Behavioural Decision Theory was introduced by the American psychologist Edwards in 1954 and was one of the first models to highlight the importance of subjective values and

beliefs in judgments and decision-making. This underpinning theory is particularly relevant in the context of customisation since the customisation task implies many decisions to make, by choosing among a vast range of product attributes.

The application of the decision-making theory during customisation is particularly relevant in the context of gifting. Past literature stated that consumers actually have poor insight into their own preferences when self-gifting (Simonson, 2005) making the decision process challenging. Similarly customising for a recipient for interpersonal gifting is complex, since it entails choosing products benefits on behalf of someone else without having access to their preferences (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009).

By investigating the relationship between the perceived benefits and costs of the customisation experience, this thesis contributes to Behavioural Decision Theory.

Gift-giving anxiety theory (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993), *Impression Management Theory* (Goffman, 1959), *Social Anxiety Theory* (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)

Psychology scholars Schlenker and Leary (1982) grounded the study of gift-giving anxiety on the concept of social anxiety. The concept of Social Anxiety originates from 'Impression Management Theory' (Goffman, 1959), which occurs *'when people are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success'* (Wooten, 2000, p.85). Impression Management Theory is concerned with how people wish to present themselves in a way that satisfies their needs and goals. In 1980, Leary and Kowalski investigated the process by which people control the impressions others form of them and how this plays an important role in interpersonal behaviour.

Social Anxiety has also been investigated in the context of gift giving, the so-called 'gift-giving anxiety' (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993; Otnes, Kim and Lowrey, 1992). Sherry, McGrath, and Levy's (1993) research 'The dark side of the gift', examined sources of gifting anxiety due to unattainable expectations that recipients impose on givers, creating stress. Inappropriate gifts can cause embarrassment to both giver and recipient, damaging their relationship. Over and above Sherry, McGrath, and Levy's (1993) findings on gifting anxiety, Wooten (2000) further theorized the experience of gift giving. He developed an expanded model of anxiety in gift giving and discovered new antecedents that precipitate gift-giving anxiety such as the characteristics of recipients, givers and gift situations. This model expanded the application of Schlenker and Leary's (1982) social anxiety to the context of gift giving. The giver wants to make the right impression on the recipient, but his expectations of succeeding

are low. Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) also referred to Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory but in the context of customisation. These authors posited that in the context of customisation for a recipient, gifting anxiety comes in addition to the co-designing anxiety.

This thesis contributes to all three related theories but going one step further than the past studies by measuring the impact of perceived anxiety (for both self-gifting and interpersonal gifting) on the consumer perceived value dimensions bestowed by customisation. The impact of the perceived complexity of the customisation task on gifting anxiety also contributes to a better understanding of these theories.

3.4 Identified research gaps and hypotheses development

This doctoral research aims to address six identified research gaps (Chapter 3). In doing so, the study makes several novel contributions to theory. For each gap, the contributions to theory and the corresponding hypotheses are detailed below.

Since the focus of the thesis are the dimensions of perceived value and their antecedents (perceived anxiety and design skill) rather than purchase intention, the direct effects of anxiety, complexity and design skill on purchase intention are not hypothesised. Similarly, perceived complexity is not hypothesized as having a direct influence on perceived value, as extant literature only suggested that complexity had an impact on anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011, Moreau *et al.,* 2020).

Research gap 1: The impact of *perceived* complexity on the anxiety felt during the customisation process.

Past research has demonstrated that customisation involves not only perceived benefits but also 'costs' such as perceived complexity during the customisation experience (Pine, 1993; Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Fogliatto*,* Da Silveira and Borenstein, 2012). For instance, according to Huffman and Kahn (1998), the way the customisation options are presented by the customisation tool (e.g., by product alternatives or attributes) can cause confusion, frustration, and therefore perceived complexity to the consumer. As Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954) suggests, perceived complexity may be further exasperated by the fact that individuals 'lack insight into their own preferences' (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009). Indeed, to decide among a set of

product options and features either for oneself or for a recipient may be daunting for the consumer.

The literature on choice complexity shows the negative effect of perceived complexity on the customisation experience (Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Simonson, 2005). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) also highlighted the presence of anxiety in the context of gift customisation. Their study suggested that design support, together with self-perceived design skill, decrease anxiety and raise product expectations when participants design products as gifts but not for themselves. However, they did not study the direct relationship between perceived complexity and perceived anxiety.

The analysis of this relationship is important. The potential distress felt by some consumer during the gift customisation process (for oneself and other) needs to be better understood to ensure a positive customisation experience. It is therefore relevant to investigate the direct effect of perceived complexity on perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation. Hence, this study helps marketers to build better customisation toolkits that aim to lessen both perceived complexity and anxiety. Indeed, Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer (2009) posit that the 'experience of difficulty' during customisation affects purchase intention.

To the author's knowledge, to date, no research has measured whether perceived complexity increases the anxiety experienced by consumers during the process of customising a gift (to oneself vs. others). The current study addresses this gap in knowledge. As a result, the study extends the application of the concept 'perceived complexity of choice' of customisation (Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009) to the context of gift giving. This research also extends the application of the interlinked theories of Gift-giving Anxiety (Sherry *et al.*, 1993) and Impression Management Theories (Goffman, 1959) to gift customisation by offering a better understanding of the antecedents that trigger anxiety during the decision process of gift customisation.

Based on the above discussion, we propose that the higher the level of complexity perceived, the higher the perceived anxiety. More formally:

H₁: *The perceived complexity of customisation will increase the anxiety felt during the customisation process.*

Research gap 2: The impact of self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation

Based on previous literature, it seems that although developers of customisation toolkits intend to make the customisation experience as user-friendly as possible, the consumer are not always confident in their skills to design a product (Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005, Huffman and Kahn, 1998).

According to the concept of social anxiety emanating from 'Impression Management Theory', the assumption is that low self-perceived design skill will increase the perception of anxiety during the customisation experience. However, just like low self- perceived design skill can increase anxiety, high confidence in design skill can also be key to a positive customisation experience (Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998).

As Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011, p.122) explain, '*The consumer's belief about their own design skill is likely to contribute to the anxiety experience during a customisation task. When people are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success, they suffer from gift giving anxiety*'. Their key finding suggests that design support, together with higher self-perceived design skill, decrease anxiety and raise product expectations when participants are designing products as gifts. Therefore, the more self-confidence in designing a gift, the more positive the customer's customisation experience seems to be, but only in the context of interpersonal gift giving according to Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) findings. These findings are somehow surprising since one could have expected that the combination of design support and high self-perceived design skill would have also decreased anxiety in the context of self-gift giving.

However, in practice, many customisation programs do not offer design support. In that case, the effect of self-perceived design skill on anxiety without the presence of design support is unknown. It is salient to examine this relationship because it offers a deeper understanding of the consumer psychology behind gift customisation. By doing so, this study contributes to 'Impression Management Theory' (Goffman 1959). Indeed, in the context of gift customisation, consumers want to make a 'good impression' by customising a gift for themselves or other, rather than purchasing a standard gift. However, they can be 'doubtful of success' if their level of self-perceived design skill is low and causes anxiety. Greater knowledge about the relationship between perceived design skill and anxiety will encourage marketers to consider the level of self-perceived design skill of the consumer when developing the customisation toolkit to optimise their confidence and decrease their anxiety. Therefore,

the direct impact of self-perceived design skill on perceptions of anxiety during gift customisation merits further investigation.

This research measures the impact of self-perceived design skill on respondents' anxiety level independently from design support, in both instances of interpersonal gifting and self-gift giving. Hence, this research complements Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) study by bringing incremental knowledge about the influence of design skills on perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation. It will confirm or refute previous findings that self-perceived design skill can decrease anxiety in the context of self-giving, as well as interpersonal gift giving.

The following hypothesis is thus put forward:

H2: *Self-Perceived design skill will decrease the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process.*

Research gap 3: The impact of anxiety on the dimensions of consumer's perceived value bestowed by gift customisation

As Larsen and Watson (2001) remark, while gifts may lead to excitement, satisfaction, and extreme pleasure for both giver and recipient, they may also provoke stress, anxiety, and disappointment. Furthermore, customising a gift implies a great deal of personal involvement from the giver in the gift creation process (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Bonney, Herd and Moreau, 2011), suggesting more pressure than for the purchase of a standard product. Moreover, the stakes in the gifting process can be high (Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007). Hence, in gift customisation, there is an evident effect of anxiety on the perceived value of customisation.

Although past research concluded that gifting anxiety is perceived by the giver in the context of gift customisation (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Bonney, Herd and Moreau, 2011), there seems to be no prior research investigating the impact of this anxiety on consumers' perceived value of customising a gift. This relationship merits investigation to shed light on the consumer psychology during the customisation process and the factors, such as anxiety, that can decrease the perceived value and ultimately affect purchase intention. Managers will be able to use the additional knowledge offered by this research to develop customisation tools that will optimise the perceived value and decrease the perceived anxiety during the process of gift customisation. This thesis also contributes to the interlinked theories of 'Impression Management Theory' (Goffman, 1959), 'Social Anxiety Theory' (Schlenker

51

and Leary, 1982) and 'Gift Giving Anxiety Theory' (Wooten, 2000) by addressing the effect of anxiety on the dimensions of consumer perceived customisation value identified by Merle *et al.*, (2010), as well as on the social value provided by the gift customisation experience (Yoo and Park, 2016).

Based on the literature discussed in Chapter 2, the overall hypothesis is that perceived anxiety has a negative effect on the perceived value of customising a gift. Justification for the effect of perceived anxiety on each of the dimensions of perceived value is provided below.

H3*: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived value of gift customisation.*

The five benefits of customisation identified by Merle *et al.* (2010) comprise two types of benefits: those provided by the customised product itself (utilitarian value, uniqueness attributes and self-expressiveness) and those provided by the customisation experience (hedonic value and creative achievement value). Justification for the effect of perceived anxiety on each of the dimensions of perceived value is provided below.

Anxiety and Utilitarian Value

In the context of customisation for oneself, the first dimension of consumer value identified by Merle *et al.* (2010) is utilitarian value. It evaluates the degree to which a customised product matches the consumer utility preferences (Dellaert and Stremersch 2005; Peppers and Rogers 1997). The judgement of the utility of a product is personal and may differ from one person to another. Hence, this uncertainty when choosing the right functional benefits of the gift may engender anxiety as per Gift Giving Anxiety Theory by Sherry, McGrath, and Levy (1993) since the utilitarian preferences of the recipient may be unknown (Wooten, 2000; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

In other words, during the customisation process, the giver may be anxious to make the right choices to meet the recipients' product utilitarian requirements. Likewise, in the context of self-gift giving, the consumer may be unsure of his own preferences (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016) and may feel anxiety when choosing his own gift.

Therefore, based on the Gift Giving Anxiety Theory (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy,1993; Wooten, 2000), the expectation is that the presence of perceived gifting anxiety will dampen the utilitarian value perceived. More formally:

H3a*: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation*

Anxiety and Uniqueness Value

The second value dimension identified by the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010) is "uniqueness value". Uniqueness value was first investigated in the field of applied psychology (Snyder 1992) and later in the context of customisation. The customised product enables consumers to show their individuality by displaying 'uniqueness attributes'. Fiore, Lee, and Kunz (2004) established that the desire to obtain a unique product is one of the incentives for taking part in a customisation program. Uniqueness value relates to the desire to obtain a unique product, thanks to the multiple options offered by the customisation toolkit (Schreier 2006). Franke and Schreier (2008) identified a positive impact of the perceived uniqueness of a mass-customised product on the utility consumers derive from mass customisation. In the gift giving literature, the salience of uniqueness has also been investigated in the context of gift choices (Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014). However, as mentioned earlier in the literature review, both customisation and gift giving can generate anxiety (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

In the context of customisation for oneself or someone else, the consumer perceives a positive feeling that he is creating a truly unique product (Merle *et al.,* 2010). However, uncertainty or lack of knowledge of the recipient's taste, yet a desire to impress and social anxiety may arise gift giving anxiety, dampening the positive sentiment of creating something unique (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993; Wooten, 2000). Therefore, the uniqueness value of customising a gift may vary according to the level of anxiety perceived. Consequently, it is expected that the degree of perceived anxiety will have an impact on the perceived uniqueness value conferred by the gift customisation experience. In other words:

H_{3b}: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.

Anxiety and Self-Expressiveness Value

The third value dimension identified by the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010) is 'self-expressiveness'. In the context of self-purchase, self-expressiveness means the consumer enjoys customising a product to his own image and identity, according to 'Self- Concept Theory' (Sirgy 1982). Customisation for oneself provides an opportunity for consumers to create products that express their personalities and personal tastes since they can choose from among many options offered by the customisation toolkit.

In his seminal study on gift giving Sherry (1983, p.159) states that gifts become *'containers for the being of the donor who gives a portion of that being to the recipient'*. Larsen and

Watson (2001) also referred to Sherry's work on the expressive value of the gift that had to include personal dimensions of the giver, predominantly an expression of the self. This statement is even more relevant in the context of customisation. Compared with standard gifts, customised gifts contain a large portion of the "donor's being" since the giver has to express his/her personal choices to create a special object for the recipient. Recently, Pizetti and Gibbert's (2018) study concluded that gift recipients value gift personalisation because of the ability of the personalised gift to express the giver's personality and tastes. 'The inherent expressivity of the personalised gift makes it highly valuable in the recipient's eyes' (Pizzetti and Gibbert 2018, p.512).

However, as discussed earlier, customising a gift can generate anxiety for the giver. An endless set of product options may overwhelm the designer and make it more difficult to create a product that reflects exactly their tastes. Sherry, McGrath, and Levy (1993, p.237) posit that *'gifts create internal stress by requiring an examination of the canons of propriety and a negotiation of identity: imputation and resistance of inauthentic versions of the self are critical elements of this stress'*. More recently, Ward and Broniarczyk (2013) concluded that consumers tend to give identity-contrary products, making product choices contrary to their own tastes to ensure the recipient's satisfaction with the product. However, this strategy of creating a gift contrary to one's own preferences may be risky. It may lead to perceived gifting anxiety at the moment of gift exchange since the giver has no guarantee that the choices he made, will match the recipient's personal preferences (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009). Similarly, in the context of self- gift giving, since consumers often doubt their own preferences (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016), they will perceive anxiety which will limit their level of self-expressiveness value.

The above discussion leads to the expectation that self-expressiveness value will be impacted negatively by the presence of perceived anxiety during the customisation experience. More formally:

H3c: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation

Anxiety and Hedonic Value

The fourth value dimension of the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010) is 'hedonic value' which is derived from the customisation experience rather than the customised product. Research on hedonic vs. utilitarian value was first conducted by Holbrook and Hirschman, (1982). Hedonic

value relates to the "experiential value" which is a holistic approach of the value construct. Both streams of literature, customisation and gift giving, refer to hedonic value.

The customisation process (Schreier, 2006), and the gifting experience (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007) provide hedonic value to the consumer. Franke and Schreier (2006) show that hedonic value significantly influences the willingness to pay a premium price for customised products. In the gifting literature, hedonic value is derived from the enjoyment of finding 'the' perfect gift (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007). In the context of gift customisation, the joy of the consumer is to design "the" perfect gift.

However, both experiences, customising and gift giving, do not involve only benefits. When customising a gift, consumers may experience anxiety since they *are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success'* (Wooten 2000, p.85). This concern to make a good impression on the recipient may lead to stress and even anxiety (Schlenker and Leary,1982). Moreover, Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts (2007, p. 896) qualify gift shopping as an *'arduous task'* and as such it does not only consist of a hedonic experience.

Anxiety is increased in the context of gift customisation since the giver must make even more choices on behalf of the recipient or for himself than when purchasing a standard gift. The lack of familiarity with the recipient's preferences (Wooten, 2000; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011) or doubts regarding one's own preferences (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016) generate anxiety. Sherry, McGrath, and Levy's (1993) research 'The dark of the Gift', examined sources of gifting anxiety due to unattainable expectations that recipients impose on givers, creating stress. Inappropriate gifts can cause embarrassment to both giver and recipient, damaging the social relationship. Therefore, given the high stakes involved in gift customisation, it is expected that the degree of gifting anxiety will impact the enjoyment of the customisation experience, hence the perceived hedonic value.

H3a: *Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.*

Anxiety and Creative Achievement Value

The fifth value dimension identified by the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010) is "creative achievement". This value dimension was also defined as "pride of authorship" (Schreier, 2006). Consumers act as designers. They will tend to value more highly the outcome of the self-design process and *'they may experience strong feelings of pride, which in turn could increase the value created'* (Schreier 2006, p.323). This value refers to the creativity and autonomy given to the consumer to customise a product.

However, the 'I designed it myself' effect, provided by the customisation experience, may be impacted by anxiety. Belk (1996, p.61) asserts that *'a perfect gift is one that the giver made a sacrifice to provide'*. One can expect that when customising, consumers may put more pressure on themselves than when buying a standard gift, and hence feel more anxious during the customisation process but also at the moment of giving the customised gift. This pressure may decrease creative achievement value, especially given that the consumer does not have access to the recipient's product preferences (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer*,* 2009) and is unsure about his own tastes (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger*,* 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016).

Consequently, the enjoyment of free creativity to design a product may then be reduced by the anxiety of not making the right product choices for the recipient or for himself. Therefore, once again, based on the desire of making a good impression by creating a special product, consumers may experience anxiety, which may dampen their perceived creative achievement value.

Therefore, the expectation is that the level of perceived gifting anxiety could lessen the perceived creative achievement value of the designer.

H3e: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

Anxiety and Social Value

Based on the gift giving literature review, 'social value' can be considered as an additional value to the five value dimensions identified by the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010), in the specific context of gift customisation. Customising a gift is even more personal and involving than purchasing a standard gift (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005). Gifts convey meaning. The value of the gift goes beyond its economic or functional purpose (Camerer, 1988). By taking the time and making the effort ('psychic costs') to design a gift for a special person or for oneself, the consumer is seeking social recognition (Robben and Verhallen, 1994; Areni, Kiecker, and Palan, 1988). The recognition of the giver's efforts and the satisfaction of the recipient of the customised gift will provide social value to the giver. This social recognition of having created a nice product will increase the giver's perceived social value (Areni, Kiecker, and Palan, 1988; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001).

However, creating a gift for oneself or other is a more challenging task than buying a 'ready-made' product. Based on Gifting Anxiety Theory, consumers put pressure on

themselves to make the desired impression but are sometimes doubtful of success (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993; Wooten, 2000). Therefore, consumers may be anxious that the gift they have customised does not bring full satisfaction to the recipient which could prevent the consumer from receiving the expected social recognition. Hence, this perceived anxiety may decrease the perceived social value. Consequently, the expectation is that anxiety experienced during the customisation journey, may dampen the perceived social value bestowed by the experience.

H3f: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived social value of gift customisation.

Research gap 4: The impact of self-perceived design skill on the consumer's perceived six value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation

Past literature has shown that one of the keys of a positive customisation experience leading to a purchase is high self-perceived design skill (Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) demonstrated that, especially in the context of inter-personal gifting, high confidence in designing a gift, decreased anxiety and raised product expectations. Therefore, the higher the self-confidence in designing a gift, the more positive the giver's customisation experience is expected to be. As discussed in the literature review, the enjoyment emanating from the customisation experience translates into six value dimensions, five identified by Merle *et al.,* (2010) and the additional dimension of social value. Therefore, the relationship between self-perceived design skill and the gift customisation value dimensions seems particularly salient to ensure a positive consumer experience during the customisation task which will then impact purchase intention.

However, to the author's best knowledge, past research has only investigated the impact of self-perceived design skill together with design support on perceived anxiety but not on the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation. Since self-perceived design skill can decrease anxiety in certain circumstances (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011), it is logical to expect that confidence in one's own design skill should also increase perceived value. This relationship merits further investigation. Highlighting the impact of self-design skill on the value dimensions during customisation contributes to Sheth's 'Theory of Consumption Values' (1991), relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour and help understand 'why we buy what we buy'.

Therefore, although no study has investigated the influence of self-perceived design skill on the six value dimensions provided by gift customisation identified by Merle *et al.,* (2010)

and on social value, this thesis postulates that self-perceived design skill will have a positive impact on all six value dimensions provided by gift customisation. Hence, we hypothesise:

H4: *Self-Perceived design skill will increase the perceived value of gift customisation.*

Self-perceived design skill and utilitarian value

Utilitarian value in the context of gift customisation refers to the aim to correctly choose the functional attributes of a product in line with the giver or the recipient's preferences (Merle *et al.,* 2010).

When consumers estimate they have low ability to customise a gift, the perceived utilitarian value is expected to be negatively impacted. Conversely, strong designing skill confidence when customising a gift is likely to contribute to the feeling of creating 'the right gift', meaning with the necessary functional attributes whether the gift is intended for self or others.

Consequently, we postulate that the level of self-perceived design skill will have a positive impact on the perceived utilitarian value during gift customisation.

H4a: *Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation.*

Self-perceived design skill and uniqueness value

Customisation gives the opportunity to the consumer to create a unique product (Schreier, 2006). Uniqueness value is the positive value dimension of obtaining a unique product thanks to the customisation process (Merle *et al.,* 2010). To create this unique product, the consumer needs to choose among many options offered by the customisation tool. The more complex the tool is, the more challenging is the online creative process. Making these multiple choices of attributes of the product require a certain degree of self-confidence in their design skill. It is likely that high self-perceived design skill will impact positively the uniqueness value. The self-perceived design skill will enhance the confidence in making the right choices to create a truly unique product as display of one's individuality whether the gift is intended for oneself or other. Conversely, low self-perceived design skill will probably make it more challenging to choose among the attributes offered to create a unique product. As a result, the hypothesis put forward in this study is that the level of self- perceived design skill will impact the uniqueness value provided by gift customisation.

H_4b: *Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.*

Self-perceived design skill and self-expressiveness value

Self-expressiveness value derives from the opportunity to possess or create a product that is a reflection of the personality of the consumer (Merle *et al*., 2020). Customisation offers this possibility by empowering consumers to design a product by choosing attributes matching their personal tastes. In order to express preferences accurately, consumers would need to have a certain level of confidence in their design skills. They need to believe that they can create a product that is an expression of their personality. It can be challenging to express oneself through a customised product, especially since consumers may have poor insight into their own preferences (Simonson, 2005). Therefore, the hypothesis put forward is that having high self-perceived design skill should ensure high self-expressiveness value. In other words, self-perceived design skill is likely to enhance self-expressiveness value during gift customisation.

H_4c: *Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation.*

Self-perceived design skill and hedonic value

Hedonic value entails the joy and entertainment derived from the customisation experience (Fiore, Lee, and Kunz, 2004; Franke and Schreier, 2006). In the gifting literature, it refers to the excitement of having found the 'perfect gift' (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007).

By extending the concept to the context of "gift customisation", this happiness would be the result of having "created" or "designed" the perfect gift for oneself or someone else.

This feeling of satisfaction with oneself to have designed a great gift is likely to be impacted by the level of self-perceived design skill. Indeed, it would probably be more challenging for a consumer who believes he is a bad designer to perceive high hedonic value during the customisation process. He may experience more negative feelings about the customisation process. Conversely, consumers who are confident in their ability to design a product are likely to find the customising experience more enjoyable.

As a result, the author sets the hypothesis that self-perceived design skill will have a positive impact on the hedonic value conferred by gift customisation.

H4a: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.

Self-perceived design skill and creative achievement value

Creative achievement value is provided by the customisation experience, whereas utilitarian value relates to the outcome of the customisation process, i.e., the attributes of the customised product (Merle *et al.,* 2010). 'Creative achievement value refers to the value acquired by the feeling of accomplishment relating to the creative task of co-designing' (Merle *et al.,* 2010).

To reach this positive feeling of accomplishment, consumers would need to be satisfied with the final design of the product they have created. Among all the customisation options presented to them, it implies that consumers consider that they have made the right choices, leading to a sentiment of achievement. This value dimension could be affected if the consumers lack confidence in their customisation skills. Conversely, strong self-perceived design will enhance their confidence in designing and lead to a feeling of accomplishment. Therefore, it is logical to expect that self-perceived design skill would increase creative achievement value. Based on the considerations above, we postulate:

H4e: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

Self-perceived design skill and social value

Building on Sheth's research (1991), Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a 'consumer value scale' with social value as one of the items defined as *'utility derived from product's ability to enhance the self-concept'* (p. 211). Based on the review of gifting and customisation literature, social value was identified as a relevant additional value dimension conferred by gift customisation. Social value is related to social recognition (Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Choosing to customise a gift rather than simply purchase a gift in a shop implies a greater personal effort. It underlines a quest for social approval from the recipient in the context of interpersonal gifting or of others or self for creating a special product in the context of self-gifting. To benefit from social value, consumers need to sense that they have performed the customised task successfully. It is likely that a high level of self-perceived design skill will help to achieve this. If the consumers feel positive about the final customised product (high

self-perceived design skill), they will be more confident in getting the social recognition they are seeking. Therefore, the hypothesis put forward is the following:

H_{4f}: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived social value of gift customisation.

Research gap 5: The effect of each of the six customisation value dimensions on the purchase intention of the customised gift.

As discussed in the literature review, gift customisation offers an ambivalent experience to the customer, which comprises positive and negative feelings. The negative outcomes are perceived complexity and anxiety. Past literature showed that the complexity of self-designing a product and the effort involved may increase the likelihood of abandoning the customisation process without actually buying the product (Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998).

The positive outcome of the customisation experience translates into the six dimensions of perceived value discussed above. However, to date, no author has investigated the impact of the customisation value dimensions on the intention to purchase the customised product, in the context of gifting (self and other). This relationship is key to understand the consumer's feelings during the process of gift customisation. Is the propensity to purchase the customised gift influenced by the consumer perception of each of the value dimensions? One can reasonably expect that the more value perceived during the customisation experience, the more inclined the consumer is to purchase the customised gift.

One of the objectives of this thesis is therefore to examine the relationship between each perceived value dimensions provided by gift customisation experience and the intention to purchase the customised gift. The findings are relevant to all designers of customisation program willing to optimise the consumer perceived value and purchase intention of customised gifts. The additional knowledge on the relationship between value perception and purchase intention contributes to the 'Theory of Consumption Values' by Sheth (1991) relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour. Indeed, the results highlight which value dimensions influence the consumer choice to purchase the customised gift. As such, this thesis expands the scope of the 'Theory of Consumption Values' to the context of gift customisation. Similarly, the findings on the importance of subjective values and beliefs in judgements in decision-making will contribute to 'Behavioural Decision Theory' and extend its application to gift customisation.

The overall hypothesis is that the six value dimensions identified in the CPVT (Merle *et al.,* 2010) and social value, will impact positively the purchase intention of the customised gift. Hence:

H5: *The perceived value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.*

The justification for the impact of each value dimension on purchase intention is provided below.

Utilitarian Value and purchase intention

The first dimension of value in the CVPT, utilitarian value, is related to the extent to which a mass-customised product corresponds to the consumer's aesthetic and functional preferences (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Peppers and Rogers, 1997). In the gift giving literature, gift shopping utilitarian value is provided by the outcome of the shopping experience, such as efficient product acquisition (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007). Based on this literature, it is logical to expect that if the gift giver believes that they have created a gift that corresponds to the recipient's needs or to their own needs, the utilitarian value emanating from the customisation experience should impact positively the willingness to purchase the gift.

H5a: *The perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.*

Uniqueness Value and purchase intention

As discussed earlier, consumers are increasingly seeking unique products and experiences (Franke and Schreier, 2008; De Bellis, *et al.,* 2016). Uniqueness value is a salient benefit provided by customisation. It was first investigated in the field of applied psychology (Snyder, 1992) and later in the context of customisation (Franke and Schreier, 2008; De Bellis *et al.,* 2016, 2019). The customised product enables consumers to show their individuality by displaying 'uniqueness attributes'. Fiore, Lee, and Kunz (2004) established that the desire to obtain a unique product is one of the motivations behind taking part in a customisation program. In the gift giving literature, the salience of uniqueness has also been investigated in the context of gift choices (Steffel and Le Boeuf, 2014). By customising a gift, consumers believe they are satisfying the individual's or their own preferences. Based on this literature, the expectation is that the belief to have created a unique gift for oneself or others will positively impact the purchase intention.

H5b: *The perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.*

Self-Expressiveness Value and purchase intention

Self-expressiveness value refers to the benefit of owning a product that reflects the consumer's own identity. Self-expressiveness value relates to self-congruity theory (Sirgy, 1982). In the context of customisation, consumers create products that express their personalities and tastes. This theory can be extended to the context of gift customisation. In the gift giving literature, Sherry (1983) asserts that gifts become 'containers for the being of the donor who gives a portion of that being to the recipient'. By creating a customised gift, consumers give a part of them and perceives self-expressiveness value. Based on the above literature of customisation and gift giving, the perception of the benefit is expected to positively affect the likelihood to buy the customised gift.

H5c*: The perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.*

Hedonic Value and purchase intention

Hedonic value relates to the 'experiential value' which is a holistic approach of the value construct (Holbrook and Hirschman 1982). Prior literature states that customisation (Schreier 2006; Merle *et al.,* 2010) and gifting experience (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007) provide hedonic value to the consumer. Fiore, Lee, and Kunz (2004) highlighted the link between wanting to have an exciting experience and the eagerness to use a customisation program. In the gifting literature, hedonic value derives from the "enjoyment" of finding 'the' perfect gift (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007). In the context of gift customisation, the joy of the giver is to design 'the' perfect gift. Therefore, based on this literature, it is expected that the positive feeling, i.e the perception of hedonic value, derived from the gift customisation experience will have a positive impact on purchase intention

H5a*: The perceived hedonic value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.*

Creative Achievement Value and purchase intention

In the customisation literature, creative achievement value refers to the 'pride of authorship' of the consumer (Schreier, 2006). The 'I designed it myself' effect (Franke, Schreier, and Kaiser, 2010) provides feelings of pride and therefore creates value. In the gift giving literature, creative achievement was investigated through the lens of the recipient. Areni, Kiecker, and

Palan (1988) referred to Belk's (1988) seminal study on gift giving and proposed that an *'individual's preferences for handcrafted, rather that mass-produced, items are due to the investment that another person made in the creation of the items'* (Areni, Kiecker, and Palan, 1988, p.87). A recent study by Pizetti and Gibbert (2018) posits that the recipients of personalised gifts value the creative achievement of the giver: *'Recipients not only appreciate the enhanced attributes of the end product but also the process that led to it, which is imagined as creative and risky'* (p.152). Based on this literature, we postulate that the giver's expectation that the recipient will recognise the creative achievement of the customised gift will encourage purchase intention.

H5e: The perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

Social Value and purchase intention

In the specific context of gift customisation, social value can be considered as an additional dimension to the already five value dimensions identified by Merle *et al.,* (2010) in the context of customisation for oneself. Larsen and Watson (2001, p.894) assert, *'the social value of a gift is derived from the symbolic representation of the tie between two social entities provided by the gift'*. Customising a gift is creating a gift for a recipient or for oneself. As such, social value refers to the recognition of the efforts of the consumer to have customised a gift. This social recognition will increase the consumer's perceived social value (Areni, Kiecker and Palan, 1988; Sweeney and Soutar, 2001). Based on this literature, the expectation is that perceived social value will positively impact the propensity of the giver to purchase the customised gift.

H5f: The perceived social value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

Research gap 6: The effect of the nature of the recipient on the hypothesised relationships

As discussed, prior studies in customisation have mostly focused on the consumer perceived value or willingness to pay when customising products for themselves rather than a recipient (Franke and Piller, 2004; Schreier, 2006; Franke, Keinz and Steger, 2009; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau and Herd, 2010; De Bellis *et al.,* 2016). Merle *et al.* (2010) developed the Consumer Perceived Value Tool (CPVT) to identify and measure all the benefits that consumers can perceive whilst customising a product for oneself.

To the best knowledge of the author's, the Consumer Perceived Value Tool developed by Merle *et al.* (2010) has only been used to identify and measure the consumer perceived value

in the context of customisation for oneself and not for a recipient (Yoo and Park, 2016). Bonney, Herd and Moreau (2011) studied consumers' reactions to customised products. They showed that the nature of the intended recipient, self-vs. other, influences expectations, emotions, satisfaction and willingness to pay. The lack of knowledge regarding whether consumers perceive the same benefits and challenges when customising a product for oneself versus a recipient is a significant gap in the literature.

As stated in the literature review (Chapter 2), both experiences, self-gift giving and interpersonal gift giving create value. The therapeutic value of self-gifting is described as a means of feeling better, while giving a gift to someone else provides enjoyment resulting from finding the perfect gift and also creates hedonic value (Babin, Gonzalez and Watts, 2007). However, in the context of gift customisation, having to choose among a list of customisation options can create confusion and even anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009; Simonson, 2005). Particularly, in the context of interpersonal gift giving, the perceived choice complexity is exacerbated since givers do not have direct access to the recipient's preferences while they create a gift. Gift givers must predict the recipient's tastes and needs which can be stressful (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

Therefore, the expectation is that, although gift customisation always implies a degree of complexity, selecting products attributes for oneself is perceived as less stressful than guessing the recipient's preferences (i.e., customise for a recipient). As stated in the literature review, in addition to the anxiety of designing a product, impression management (Schlenker and Leary, 1982) and gift giving anxiety (Wooten, 2000) come into play in the context of interpersonal gift giving. Given the stakes in gift giving, it is logical to expect that the giver will experience more pressure on themselves when customising a gift for someone else rather than for themselves. Customising a gift for a close friend may spark a different level of stress or anxiety compared to customising for oneself. Ward and Broniarczyk (2013, p. S271) state that '*the choice of the right gift is more complex than choosing something for oneself*'.

However, to the author's best knowledge, no past research has examined the salience of the nature of recipient as a moderator of the positive and negative relationships linked to gift customisation. Consequently, we propose that the relationships between the constructs of the conceptual framework will be moderated by the nature of the recipient, self-vs. other.

In other words, the hypothesis put forward is that if a consumer customises a gift for a recipient, e.g., a close friend, all the hypothesised relationships (i.e., *H1 to H5f)* will be stronger than in the instance of self-gift giving. Thus, the expectation is the following:

H6: *The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H1 to H5f*

Figure 2. Conceptual Framework
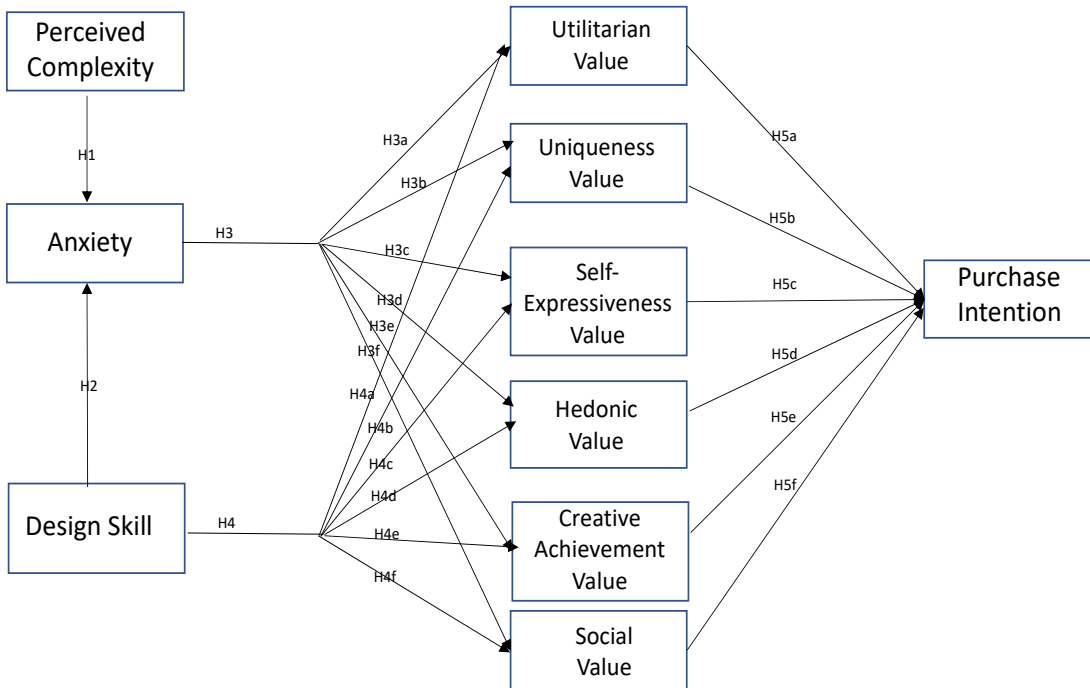
H6: The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on H1 to H5f.

CHAPTER 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Design

Having set the research objectives and hypotheses, the next step in the research process entails the choice of design of the research. In this respect, a few methodological decisions must be made, specifically, decisions regarding the research design, the research strategy, the level of analysis and the temporal aspect of the research (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020).

4.1.1 Research Paradigms

Within each of the two research methods, quantitative and qualitative, it is essential to examine the paradigmatic foundation, which comprises of ontological assumptions, epistemological assumptions and the methodology underpinning any research study. Paradigms are '*determinants and drivers of good research*' (Tronvoll *et al.,* 2011, p.560).

Brymand and Bell (2018, p.4) define a paradigm as *'a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done and how results should be interpreted*'. Research paradigms have significant value in empirical research and are essential for understanding the lens through which the research has been designed and executed. In fact, Guba and Lincoln (1994) posit that the choice of research paradigm should come ahead of the choice of method since paradigm influences the methodological choices.

Ontological Assumptions

Ontology refers to the basic question such as whether an objective reality exists. It provides a lens to formulate research questions, guiding selection and use of theories and research methods (Tronvoll *et al*., 2011).

In this thesis, on the basis of the separation of the subject and object of knowledge, the purely theoretical attitude of the uninvolved observer is adopted so that the focus is exclusively on the object. Indeed, the objectives and research questions of this study dictate the use of

quantitative methods to investigate the relationships between the research constructs. The chosen data collection method is self-completion online surveys requiring very limited interference of the researcher. Hence, the researcher has adopted the ontological position of objectivism, which is the ontological foundation of quantitative methods (Bryman and Bell, 2018).

Epistemological Assumptions

Epistemology addresses how we perceive the world and raises questions about both how we understand it and how we communicate this knowledge to others (Tronvoll *et al.,* 2011).

For this thesis, given that this intended doctoral research is based on existing theories, a positivist stance will be assumed, following Auguste Comte (1830)'s philosophy that all good intellects have repeated that there can be no real knowledge but that which is based on observed facts. This positivist approach is the philosophical foundation of quantitative research methods, which uses manipulation and control, deduction and it begins with hypotheses and theories that needs abstract language to write-up. In this thesis, hypotheses formulated, based on theories, are tested, using a deductive approach to draw conclusions and answer the research questions. Hence, an objectivist epistemological approach is adopted. The positive epistemological assumption has been widely used in quantitative research in the field of consumer behaviour and more specifically in past research in customisation and gift giving. Key studies, used as a base for this thesis (e.g., Franke and Piller, 2004; Shreier, 2006; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011, 2020; Yoo and Park, 2016 etc.) have also adopted a positivist approach.

Figure 3. The Process of Deduction

```
┌─────────────┐
│   Theory    │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│ Hypotheses  │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│    Data     │
│ Collection  │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│  Findings   │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│ Hypotheses  │
│ Confirmed/  │
│  Rejected   │
└─────────────┘
       │
       ▼
┌─────────────┐
│ Revision of │
│   Theory    │
└─────────────┘
```

Source: Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2018) *Business Research Methods*. 5th Edition.p.11, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

4.1.2 Research Purpose

According to Hart (2018), the main objectives of research in social sciences are explaining, exploring or describing the existence (or non-existence) of a phenomenon. These three types of goals are summarised below:

TABLE 6. Goals of Research

TYPE	GOAL
Exploratory	Questions focus on the how, what, when and where. Studies tend to be small scale and often informal in structure, for example, illuminative evaluation
Descriptive	Questions focus on the how and what. Studies tend to be small scale and qualitative, for example, ethnomethodological research.
Explanatory	Questions focus on the why and aim to uncover law and regularities of a universal nature. Studies can be large or small scale and are often based on hypothetico-deductivism and associated quantitative data.

Source: Hart, C. (2018) *Doing a Literature Review, Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination,* p. 47. Sage Publications: London.

The aim of the thesis is explanatory or hypothesis testing. Hypotheses have been formulated clearly and were tested to establish the nature of the relationship between two variables (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2016). The relationship between two variables may be causal or correlational, with the difference being that only causal relationships can demonstrate if one variable cause change in the other, or not (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020). This thesis adopts a causal approach.

4.1.3 Research design

Having previously defined the rationale of research and the research aims, it is important to clearly establish the steps to reach these goals. The first step is the definition of the research design. It is the conceptual structure within which research will be conducted. With this in mind, the author decided to choose the comprehensive Sekaran and Bougie's (2020) research design framework as a guide for the intended research project.

Figure 4. The Research Design Framework
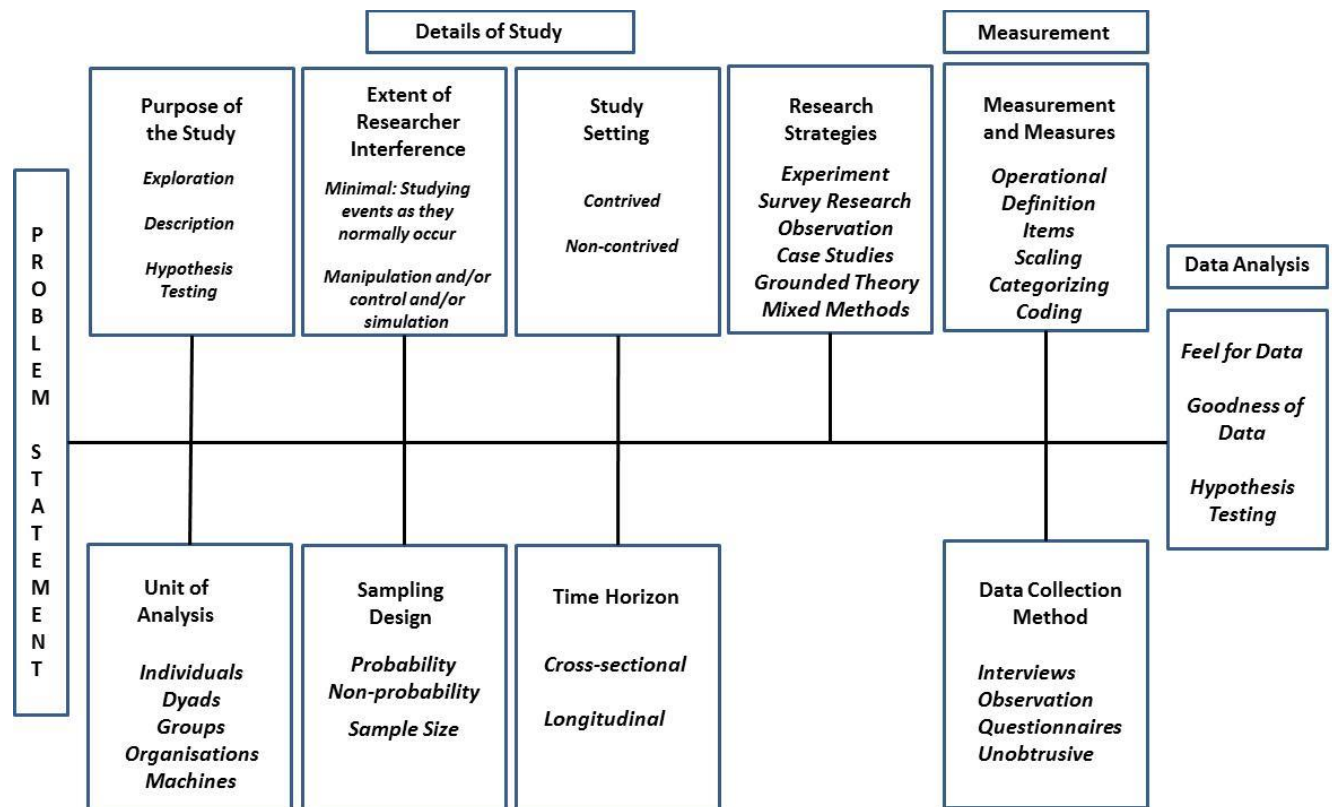
Source: Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. (2020) '*Research Methods for Business.* 8th Edition. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. Ltd.

Prior major studies on mass customisation used experimental designs (Franke and Piller, 2004; Shreier, 2006; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011) but also scale development (Merle *et al.,* 2010) and surveys (Yoo and Park, 2016). Conversely, extensive literature on gift giving and social anxiety in general have used qualitative methods since they are linked to anthropology (Mauss, 1954; Levi-Strauss, 1965) or sociology (Schlenker and Leary, 1982; Wooten, 2000). However, several studies in gift giving have used also quantitative methods, choosing experiments as research designs (Robben and Verhallen, 1994; Ward and Broniarczyk, 2013; Givi and Galak, 2017). An experimental design can establish cause-effect relationships.

As stated in the objectives of this study, this doctoral research investigates the causal relationships between anxiety and the six value dimensions of customisation, and between perceived design skill and the six value dimensions. The impact of perceived complexity on the anxiety felt during the customisation process is also analysed. The effect of each of the six value dimensions on the dependent variable 'purchase intention' of the customisation bag is

71

tested. Finally, the impact of the nature of the recipient, self vs. other on all these causal relationships are examined.

Based on the research designs adopted in relevant prior studies in the field and given the explanatory or hypotheses testing objective of the intended research, the relevant research design for this study is an experimental design with questionnaire-based survey as data collection method.

4.1.4 Study setting

According to Sekaran and Bougie (2020), research may be conducted in a contrived or non-contrived setting, depending on whether the study is causal or correlational. In a contrived setting, such as laboratory experiments, the variables of interest are strictly controlled by the researcher to assess the 'cause and effect' relationships (Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks, 2017).

Equally, in a non-contrived setting, research takes place in a natural environment where the subjects under investigation proceed normally and data are collected without the undue influence of the researcher (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020). This method ensures a better external validity, however, does not guarantee the interference of external factors that may alter the results of the experiment.

The study setting for this research is contrived. However, the participants will not have to be physically present in the laboratory. The data collection was conducted through surveys using online self-completion questionnaires from their own computer at home.

Therefore, one could argue that the respondents were more in their natural environment during the customisation task than if they were to do the customisation task in the laboratory. On the other hand, since the respondents were not in the laboratory, they might be less committed to the survey and therefore the study may have less internal validity compared with a proper lab experiment. The advantage of an experimental design using a survey as data collection method is that a larger sample can be used. On the other hand, compared to an experiment conducted inside a laboratory, the control of the settings will be weakened (Bryman and Bell, 2018).

4.1.5 Researcher Interference

To be able to test the six hypotheses and establish causal relationships, interference of the researcher was required by using scenario-based experiments. According to Kim and Jang (2014), scenario-based research makes it easier to control variables that are otherwise difficult to control, and it is also a way to operationalise manipulations. The scenarios and questionnaires are designed to test the research model and the associated proposed hypotheses.

Four different scenarios and questionnaires were sent to four different experimental groups. Each group will receive a different treatment. As such, the interference of the researcher for this study can be considered as high according to Sekaran and Bougie's (2020) research design framework (see Figure 3. above).

4.1.6 Time Horizon

The main collection of data was done at one point in time is a cross sectional study, as opposed to over a period of time, which is known as a longitudinal study (Bryman and Bell 2018). A cross sectional study, also called one-shot study was conducted for this research as it was sufficient to answer the research questions. However, to test the questionnaires and scenarios, the present research included a pre-test, a pilot study and a main study. Therefore, effectively there were three data collection periods, as presented in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Data Collection dates

Pre-test	September 2019
Pilot study	October 2020
Main study	May 2021

The data were collected using the UK based recruiting platform 'Prolific' for the pilot and the final study (see details in section 4.1.8). Once the questionnaires were uploaded on the Prolific website, the respondents meeting the required criteria could customise the bag and then answered the questionnaire. The entire task, the customisation of the bag and filling out the questionnaire, took them up to 20 minutes.

4.1.7 Unit of analysis

The unit of analysis refers to the level of aggregation of the data collected during the subsequent data analysis stage (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020). It is an important decision, as it dictates the data collection method and the size of the sample. Since the aim of this research is to analyse the consumer's perceived value and perceived challenges during the customisation experience, the unit of analysis is the consumer, hence individuals.

4.1.8 Sampling design and sampling size

Sampling Design

Furthermore, an important step in the survey research is to decide on the sample design. The idea is to create a representative sample, which will allow the researcher to generalise findings from a sample to a population. Consequently, the population needs to be defined before the sample can be selected.

Females seem to be often the chosen population in the literature. Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Moreau *et al*. (2020) selected female students aged 18-24 years on the basis that prior studies on gift giving used only female respondents (i.e., Sherry, McGrath, and Levy,1993). Moreover, the product to customise for Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) study was a tote bag whose brand has a 97% female customer base. Wooten's (2000) qualitative study on gifting anxiety also chose an unequal number of females versus males. Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Wooten (2000) argued that based on previous studies, women are usually in charge of gift purchase in the household (Fisher and Arnold, 1990, Vanhamme and DeBont, 2008). Following prior studies and to optimise the validity of the findings, a female only sample was used.

An online market research agency called 'Prolific' which enlists online participants for surveys and market research through its panel, for surveys and market research was used to recruit the respondents for the pilot and for the main study. Prolific panel has a total pool of around 150,000 participants from around the world. For the UK population, they use census data from the ONS to put together the sample. Participants can be filtered using 250+ demographic screeners (e.g., sex, age, nationality, first language), to create custom screeners, or generate a representative sample. Prolific builds powerful and flexible tools for online research and collect high quality responses from people around the world within minutes. Data collection through the Prolific panel is completed within 2 hours on average. Prolific online

recruitment platform has been widely used in recent research in the field of social sciences (Peer *et al.,* 2017; Palan and Schitter, 2018; Singh *et al.,* 2020)

After applying the required filters (details in section 4.6.2), about 5,000 respondents among the panel were eligible to participate to the pilot study and later to the final data collection. Participants were incentivised at the rate recommended by Prolific.

For the final collection, this thesis employed a different sample of respondents drawn from the same population of respondents as the pilot study. In addition, for the final data collection, one of the filters ensured that respondents could only participate to one of the four versions of the survey and had not previously participated to the pilot study. This was done to avoid contaminating the main experimental data results (Feldman and Lynch, 1988).

The main study employed the same filters to screen the respondents as the one used in the pilot study. To minimise systematic error, all participants were randomly allocated to the four experimental groups. The detailed operationalisation of the data collection for the pilot and the main study are explained in section 4.4.

Sample Size

Regarding sample size (*n*), prior research in customisation and gift giving relevant to this study has used a range of sample size. For instance, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011), conducted in-lab experiments using a sample of 81 female college students aged between 18 and 24 years old. The respondents were asked to achieve the customisation task in the laboratory. Conversely, Yoo and Park (2016) used an online survey as a data collection method and as a result, selected a larger sample of 303 female consumers. Based on the conceptual framework of the proposed research, the most appropriate method of analysis of the results was deemed partial least squares path modeling (PLS) as explained in the "data analysis technique" section below. When using PLS, Hair *et al.* (2016) suggest a minimum of 10 valid data points for each independent variable of the conceptual framework. A sample size of 400 (100 for each experimental group) was deemed adequate and recruited on Prolific online platform.

4.2 Error and bias minimisation

4.2.1 Error minimisation

According to Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks (2017), several potential sources of error can affect the research design. A good research design should attempt to control the various sources of error. The types of common errors and bias in quantitative research and the methods used to intend to decrease them are detailed below.

Sources of error

There are two types of error that can affect the outcome of an experiment. The first type is random error and the second type is systematic error or constant error (Ringdon, 1994).

Random Error

Random error refers to extraneous variables whose average influence on the outcome is the same in both or all the conditions. Random error can be caused by minor events that may occur during experimental procedure or by other extraneous influences on the subject's behaviour (e.g., fatigue) which are beyond the control of the experimenter (Ringdon,1994). In an attempt to control the random error in this study, the researcher took measures by including in the four questionnaires attention check and system check questions in the four versions of the questionnaire:

- *Attention check questions:*

The first attention check question was the 4th question of the survey. Respondents were asked to copy and paste the link of the bag they had just customised. As such, it was possible to visually check that the participant had fully engaged in the customisation task by choosing all required customisation options as per the brief.

> **Q4- PLEASE PASTE URL LINK HERE below of the "shopping cart" webpage showing the bag you have just customised:**

Moreover, the Lonchamp bag customisation webpage offers two types of bags to customise, i) 'My Pliage Signature bag' which is the default choice when opening the page, and ii) 'My Pliage Club'. The customisation options for both bags differ. Therefore, to ensure that all respondents were customising the exact same type of bag to limit bias and increase validity of

76

the results, the brief to the respondents highlighted that they had to choose to customise the 'My Pliage Signature Bag' and not the 'My Pliage Club'. Therefore, the following attention check question was formulated:

Q5 – Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I have customised a 'My Pliage Club' bag:

◯ Agree

◯ Disagree

An additional check question was the 6th question of the survey. The aim was to make sure the respondents had respected the brief by choosing among all 6 options for the high complexity experimental groups (Shape, Body, Trimming, Finish, Initials, Stamping) and only two options, Shape and Body for the low complexity experimental groups.

Q6- Please tick the customisation options you used during the customisation task:

◯ Shape

◯ Body

◯ Trimming

◯ Finish

◯ Initials

◯ Stamping

- *System check question:*

Question 9 was a system check question stated as follows:

Q9- System check: please tick "strongly disagree" here:

- ○   Strongly disagree

- ○   Disagree

- ○   Somewhat disagree

- ○   Neither Agree nor Disagree

- ○   Somewhat Agree

- ○   Agree

- ○   Strongly Agree

Systematic Error

Ringdon (1994) contend that systematic error is considered more serious than the random error because whilst random error typically increases the baseline variability in all experimental conditions, systematic error tends to influence all the scores in one condition in the same direction and to have no effect, or a different effect on the scores in the other condition. Thus, systematic error can affect the size of the difference between the two conditions, thereby distorting the experimenter's source of information about the effects of the independent variable and possibly vitiating the results of the whole experiment. Importantly, systematic error can make it look as though the two variables are related, when in fact they are not, thus the experimenter may conclude that the hypothesis has been confirmed when it is not. This may result in publication of spurious findings. In this study, to avoid systematic error and to draw causal inferences from data, the participants were randomly assigned to the four experimental groups.

4.2.2 Bias minimisation

There are two main types of bias that may intrude into experiments casting doubt on the validity of the experiment or threaten the internal validity of the experiments, especially when the experimental units are people. The first bias is due to the participant's perception of the

demand characteristics of the experimental situation, the second bias stems from the unintentional influence of the experimenter (Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey, 2014).

Bias due to demand characteristics

As a role-playing method is employed, efforts were made to check for demand effects, as demand characteristics can pose a threat to the internal validity of the experiment, especially when people are the experimental units (Surprenant and Solomon, 1987). Demand characteristics result from cues in the experimental environment or procedure that led participants to make inferences about the purpose of an experiment and to respond in accordance with (or in some cases, contrary to) the perceived purpose. Demand characteristics influence a participants' perceptions of what is appropriate or expected and hence their behaviour. Thus, there may be an inclination on part of the participants to guess the experiments hypothesis (Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey, 2014). If the participants believe that they have guessed the hypothesis, they may behave in a manner consistent with it, tailoring their responses to fit their view of the theory and attempting to cooperate with the experimenter. Alternatively, participants may attempt to either express hostility or try to outwit the experimenter by performing in a manner that directly contradicts the hypothesis.

To avoid this bias, neither the researcher nor Prolific platform had any direct interaction with the respondents. The survey was published on the online recruitment platform and eligible respondents could independently choose to customise the bag and complete the survey. The information about the research given to the respondents was the topic of the survey: 'Customisation of a bag'. Prolific also asked the researcher to briefly state what task the respondents would be expected to do during the survey. The following general information was given: 'Respondents will be asked to customise a bag and then tell us about their positive and negative feelings during this experience'. With this information and the proposed rate per hour, the pool of filtered respondents could decide whether they would be interested in participating to the survey.

Furthermore, instead of designing an artificial customisation page to conduct the experiment, the researcher decided to use a fully functioning customisation website of a well-established brand "Longchamp". Therefore, although the respondents were briefed ahead of the customisation task, the design of the bag was done on a real website without any manipulation on behalf the researcher for the purpose of the experiment, similarly to Yoo and Park (2016), who used the Burberry customisation website.

Bias due to the unintentional influence of the experimenter

Malone, Nicholl, and Tracey (2014) contend that experimenters differ in gender, skill, technique, personality and many other factors, all of which can interact with the experimental operations to systematically bias results. Kirk (2012) argues that researcher's overt requests may be accompanied by other more subtle requests and messages. For instance, body language, tone of voice and facial expressions can communicate the researcher's expectations and desires concerning the outcome of an experiment. However, in this research this bias may not be of any concern as the researchers conducted experiments using Qualtrics and the experimenter did not meet any of the respondents face-to-face.

Common method bias

Common method bias can appear when both the independent and dependent variable is captured by the same response method (Kock, Berbekova, and Assaf, 2021). They may lead to erroneous conclusions about the relationship between variables by inflating or deflating the findings (Craighead *et al*., 2011). Therefore, in an attempt to reduce the effects of common method bias, this study used different formats of closed-ended questions with different anchors (e.g., two way closed-ended, multiple choice or Likert type scales) as advocated by Podsakoff *et al.* (2003).

- *Two way closed ended questions*

Q1- Have you ever customised anything online before?

   ○ yes ○ no

Q5- Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I have customised a "My Pliage Club" bag:

   ○ Agree ○ Disagree

- *Multiple choice closed ended questions:*

Q6- Please tick the customisation options you used during the customisation task:

○   Shape

○   Body

○   Trimming

○   Finish

○   Initials

○   Stamping

- *Likert Scale closed-ended questions:*

Q3- How luxurious would you describe the Longchamp brand?

(1= not at all luxurious and 7= very luxurious)

○ 1   ○ 2   ○ 3   ○ 4   ○ 5   ○ 6   ○ 7

Q8- Please state the extent to which you experienced any of the following feelings while customising the Pliage bag as a gift to yourself for a special occasion:

○   Strongly disagree

○   Disagree

○   Somewhat disagree

○   Neither Agree nor Disagree

○   Somewhat Agree

○   Agree

○   Strongly Agree

Social desirability bias

Social-desirability bias is a tendency of survey respondents to answer questions in a manner that will be viewed favorably by others. It is considered to be one of the most common and

pervasive sources of bias affecting the validity of experimental and survey research findings in social sciences and can potentially obscure relationships between the independent and the dependent variables (King and Bruner, 2000).

However, there is little concern for the presence of social desirability bias in this study due to the absence of situations that foster social desirability bias. For instance, in this study, a self-completion online survey with no in person contact was employed to reduce social desirability bias as opposed to retrospective surveys relying on self-report measures. Indeed, when conducting research with self-reports, this bias interferes with the interpretation of average tendencies as well as individual differences (King and Bruner, 2000).

Moreover, the study does not investigate topics which are personally or socially sensitive. Importantly, participant's anonymity is maintained throughout the data collection process. The researcher did not meet any of the respondents personally as the data were collected via an online survey tool, namely Qualtrics.

4.3 Measurements

Measurement of the variables in the theoretical framework is a key part of the research design. It allows to test hypotheses and to find answers to the research questions (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020). *'A scale is a tool or mechanism by which individuals are distinguished as to how they differ from one another on the variables of interest to our study'* (Sekaran and Bougie 2020, p.141). There are four types of scales: nominal, ordinal, interval, and ratio depending on the characteristics to be measured. The scales adopted in this research are Likert-type response scales, which means an ordinal typically seven-point scale (anchored at 'strongly disagree' and 'strongly agree'). Likert scales are widely used in the field of consumer behaviour.

Value dimensions of customisation and gift giving

Merle *et al.* (2010) developed a scale to measure the consumer perceived value conferred by the customisation product and by the customisation experience in the context of self-purchase (Consumer -Perceived Value Tool or CPVT). The consumer perceived value scale consists of five factors: hedonic value, utilitarian value, self-expressiveness value, uniqueness value and creative achievement value. In the first conceptualisation of the CPVT, the five factors included 20 items in total. However, after the required validity and reliability checks, a shorter version of the scale with 14 items was proposed and finally retained by Merle *et al.*

(2010) (See Appendix A2). The validity and reliability of this shortened 14-item scale was assessed following the same procedure as for the full scale. Detailed results of the scale's psychometric qualities are available in the Appendix A3., the results of the delta chi-square test demonstrated that the reduced 14-item scale is significantly better than the full 20-item scale (x_2 =208.58, df = 93, p <0.001). Based on Merle *et al.*'s (2010) scale assessment results and given the complexity of the model and the length of the questionnaire for this thesis, the 14- item scale version was retained for this study (see Table 8 below).

Table 8. Items of the Consumer-Perceived Value Tool

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Value provided by customised product		
Utilitarian Value	**U1. This (product name) is exactly what I had hoped for*** U3. The (product name) I created fits my expectations **U4. I could create the (product name) that was the most adapted to what I was looking for*** **U5. I could create the (product name) I really wanted to have***	Merle, A., Chandon, J.L, Roux, E., Alizon, F. (2010) 'Perceived Value of the Mass-Customized Product and Mass Customization Experience for Individual Consumers', Production and Operations Management, 19(5), pp. 503–514.
Uniqueness Value	Un1. At least I will be the only one to have this (product name) **Un2. With this (product name), I will not look like everybody else*** Un3. Having this (product name) will enable me to stand out from the others **Un4. With this program, I could design (product name) that others will not have*** **Un5. With this (product name), I have my small element of differentiation compared to others***	
Self-Expressiveness Value	SE1. This customised (product name) represents who I am **SE2. I could create a (product name) that is just like me*** **SE3. This (product name) reflects exactly who I am*** **SE4. This (product name) is in my own image***	
Value provided by customisation experience		
Hedonic Value (Experiential value)	**H1. I found it fun to customize this (product name) *** **H2. I really enjoyed creating this (product name) *** **H3. Customizing this (product name) was a real pleasure*** H4. Modifying this (product name) was enjoyable H5. Designing a (product name) is a great play activity	Merle, A., Chandon, J.L, Roux, E., Alizon, F. (2010) 'Perceived Value of the Mass-Customized Product and Mass Customization Experience for Individual Consumers', Production and Operations Management, 19(5), pp. 503–514.
Creative Achievement	**CA3. (Brand name) gave me a lot of autonomy in the creation of this (product name), and I really enjoyed it*** **CA4. I could give my creativity free rein while designing this (product name) ***	

*items retained in the short version of the scale

Regarding 'social value' identified in the gift giving literature as a sixth relevant value dimension of perceived consumer value in the context of gift customisation, Sweeney and Soutar (2001) developed a multi-item scale on consumer perceived that include social value as a construct with 4 items (See Table 9 below).

Table 9. Items of Social Value

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Social Value	SV1. would help me to feel acceptable SV2. would improve the way I am perceived SV3. would make a good impression on other people SV4. would give its owner social approval	Sweeney, J.C. and Soutar, G.N. 2001, 'Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale', *Journal of Retailing,* vol. 77, no. 2, pp. 203-220.

It is important to highlight the fact that neither the Consumer Perceived Value Tool (Merle *et al.,* 2010) nor the Social Value scale developed by Sweeney and Soutar (2001) have been tested in the context of gift customisation. Therefore, adjustments to the wording of the items of the scales may be needed.

Perceived gifting anxiety

Wooten (2000) has developed a model theorizing the experience of gifting anxiety based on prior studies on social anxiety (Schlenker and Leary, 1982) and gift giving (Sherry *et al.,*1993). However, Wooten's research was qualitative and therefore, no relevant measurement tool can be used in the intended research.

Given the absence of existing scale, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) has measured the level of anxiety in the context of gift customisation using 'self-assessment' method from the respondents. After the customisation task, *'participants reported their current level of anxiety. On three nine-point scales, participants indicated the extent to which they were feeling frustrated, nervous, and stressed. The three items were averaged to create an index of anxiety-related negative emotions'* (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011, p.124).

For this thesis, the 'self-assessment' method was borrowed to measure the degree of perceived anxiety. Participants were asked to indicate on a three- item seven-point scale, the level of anxiety they experienced during the customisation task. The author chose to use a seven-point scale instead of a nine-point scale like Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) to ensure consistency with the other scales as per the Hair *et al.*'s (2016) advice. As such, the impact of this anxiety on the perceived consumer value in the context of gift customisation could be inferred.

Table 10. Items of Perceived Anxiety

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Perceived Anxiety	AX1. Feeling stressed AX2. Feeling nervous AX3. Feeling frustrated	Moreau et al. (2011) 'It's the Thought (and the Effort) That Counts: How Customizing for Others Differs from Customizing for Oneself.', Journal of Marketing, 75(5), pp. 120–133.

Perceived complexity

As discussed in the literature review, consumers often perceive complexity during the customisation process. Huffman and Kahn (1998) developed a scale: 'perceived complexity of choice set' in the context of customisation, relating to confusion and complexity. This measure was adopted to measure consumer perceived complexity (see Table 11 below).

Moreover, according to Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, (2009, p.758), *'Choice complexity is related to the difficulty of processing a large amount of information on the available alternatives.'* To ensure a better validity of the measurement of perceived complexity in the context of gift customisation, the author borrowed an additional item from the 'choice difficulty scale' by Dhar and Nowlis (2004). The three items combined, measured perceived complexity during gift customisation (see Table 11 below).

Table 11. Items of Perceived Complexity

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Perceived Complexity	CO1. With regard to choices, I think there was too much complexity CO2. With regard to choices, I think there was too much confusion	Huffman, C. and Kahn, B. E. (1998) 'Variety for Sale: Mass Customization or Mass Confusion?', Journal of Retailing, 74(4), pp. 491–515. (Perceived Complexity of Choice Set with 2 items)
	CO3. With regard to customizing the choice, I think the decision was very difficult. (based on choice difficulty scale by Dhar and Nowlis 2004)	Valenzuela, A., Dhar, R. and Zettelmeyer, F. (2009) 'Contingent Response to Self-Customization Procedures: Implications for Decision Satisfaction and Choice', Journal of Marketing Research, 46(6), pp. 754–763. (Choice difficulty: one item)

Self-Perceived Design Skill

For this thesis, the independent variable 'Self-Perceived Design Skill' is measured by adopting the four-item scale of Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011). However, instead of participants reporting on a nine-point scale, they reported on a seven-point scale, in line with the other measures (as recommended by Hair *et al.*, 2016).

Table 12. Items of Self-Perceived Design Skill

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Self-Perceived Design Skill	DS1. I am a good designer DS2. I have the skills necessary to deign a good bag DS3. Creativity is an important part of my identity DS4. Friends would select me to design a bag on their behalf	Moreau, C. P., Bonney, L. and Herd, K. B. (2011) 'It's the Thought (and the Effort) That Counts: How Customizing for Others Differs from Customizing for Oneself.', *Journal of Marketing*, 75(5), pp. 124.

Purchase Intention

The outcome of the conceptual framework of this thesis, 'Purchase Intention', is measured on a two-item seven-point scale borrowed and adapted from the study by Merle, Chandon and Roux (2008). The first item is 'Likelihood to purchase the customised bag', and the second item is 'Probability to purchase the customised bag'.

Table 13. Items of Purchase Intention

CONSTRUCT	ITEMS	SOURCE
Purchase Intention	PI1.Likelihood to purchase the customised bag PI2.Probability to purchase the customised bag	Merle, A., Chandon, J.-L. and Roux, E. (2008) 'Understanding the perceived value of mass customization: the distinction between product value and experiential value of co-design', *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (English Edition) (AFM c/o ESCP-EAP)*, 23(3), pp. 27–50.

4.4 Data Collection Method

Data was collected through surveys using online self-completion questionnaires on the professional survey platform named Qualtrics. Participants were asked to customise a bag using the online customisation tool of an existing brand luxury bag brand called 'Longchamp'. Real customisation webpages have been widely used in past research in the field of customisation to enhance the external validity of the experiments. For instance, the participants

of Merle *et al.*'s (2010) research customised their favorite pair of Nike shoes using the 'Nike ID' customisation page. Yoo and Park (2016) sent a URL link to their respondents to the customisation page of Burberry, called 'Burberry Bespoke' and asked them to customise a trench coat online. Finally, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) also collaborated with an online company specialised in customised tote bag.

Using a fully functioning website increases the realism of the customisation experience rather than creating an artificial customisation page for the purpose of a study. One disadvantage of using the live customisation page of a brand is that the layout of the page can be changed anytime without notice by the brand during the research project. This is what happened during this study. Between the Pilot Study and the Main Study, the researcher had to amend the options available to customise the bag on the questionnaires to match the new version of the 'My Pliage' website.

For the present research, a link to the Longchamp 'My Pliage' was embedded into the questionnaires on Qualtrics. Participants first performed the customisation task on the Longchamp website. Once the customisation task was completed, they were then redirected to Qualtrics to complete the questionnaire. Respondents answered a multiple-choice questionnaire about their experience. Data collection was done at one point in time.

According to Bryman and Bell (2018), online self-completion questionnaires have advantages and disadvantages. The benefits are that they are cheaper and quicker to administer. They also ensure less interference of the researcher. One of the drawbacks is that there are no opportunities to prompt or probe the respondents.

4.5 Operationalisation of the study

4.5.1 Manipulations

Building on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) research, this thesis aims to highlight the negative and positive feelings bestowed by the customisation experience. In line with these authors, this study manipulated the recipient, self vs. other. However, contrary to Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011), who investigated the effect of the presence vs. absence of design support during customisation, this study focused on the impact of the customisation task complexity (i.e., low vs. high number of options to choose from when customising the bag) on perceived anxiety and perceived complexity.

The research design for this study therefore employed a 2 (task complexity: high vs. low) by 2 (the nature of the recipient of the customised bag: self-gifting vs. interpersonal gifting) between subjects factorial experiments. This resulted in four questionnaire versions: i) high complexity – self-gifting; ii) high complexity - interpersonal gifting; iii) low complexity – self-gifting; iv) low complexity - interpersonal gifting.

The operationalisation of both manipulations is explained in detailed below.

i)   Manipulation of the complexity of the customisation tool

Complexity group allocation

Half of the study participants was randomly allocated to the 2 high complexity groups and were therefore asked to customise a bag using a highly complex customisation tool with a large set of customisation features (6 main features, each including a number of further options). The other half was randomly allocated to the 2 low complexity groups and were asked to customise a bag using a low complexity customisation tool with limited customisation features (2 features in total).

- Respondents allocated to the high complexity customisation groups were instructed to consider the full set of features offered by Longchamp: 'My Pliage' online customisation program. The participants had to customise six features: Shape, Body, Trimming, Finish (zipper + snap), Initials and Stamping. For each feature, the participants could choose among multiple options.
- Respondents allocated to the low complexity customisation tool were asked to complete only two customisation features (Shape and Colour) from Longchamp 'My Pliage' online customisation program.

Complexity realism test

To ensure the validity of the manipulation of the complexity tool, before the data collection a realism test was conducted on 10 people selected among friends and family of the researcher. A link to the 'My Pliage' customisation page was sent to each of them by email. Five people were asked to customise the bag using all six features available from 'My Pliage' customisation page (high complexity condition) and then email back to the researcher their score (on a scale from 1 to 7) of the perceived complexity of the task. The other five people were asked to customise the bag using only two features, shape and body colour (low complexity condition) and then email back to the researcher their score of the perceived complexity of the task.

- For the high complexity group, 4 out of 5 gave a score of 4 and above for complexity.

- For the low complexity group, 5 out of 5 gave a score below 4 for complexity.

In the light of these results (see details in Appendix B), the manipulation of the complexity tool was considered to be realistic and could be used when allocating the respondents to the two conditions, high vs. low complexity groups.

ii)   Nature of the recipient of the gift

As discussed in the critical literature review, customising a gift for a close friend may spark a different level of stress or anxiety compared to customising for oneself. Ward and Broniarczyk (2013, p. S271) state that "*the choice of the right gift is more complex than choosing something for oneself*". However, to the author's best knowledge, no past research has examined the salience of the nature of recipient as a moderator of the positive and negative relationships linked to gift customisation. Therefore, for this thesis:

- half of the participants were asked to customise the bag for themselves for a special occasion (self-gift giving).
- the other half was asked to customise the bag as a gift for someone else for a special occasion (interpersonal gifting).

The expectation is that all the hypothesised causal relationships in the conceptual framework would be impacted differently if the consumer customises a bag for herself or for someone else. More precisely, the assumption put forward is that all the hypothesised relationships will be stronger than in the instance of self-gift giving as explained above in section 3.4.

4.6 Pre-testing and Piloting and Main Study

As per Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks's (2017) recommendations, to test the questionnaires and eliminate potential issues, the author of this thesis conducted a preliminary test on 38 friends and family members followed by a pilot test on a sample of 120 respondents from the relevant population (pilot data collected by Prolific).

For the pre-test, a convenience sample was recruited by posting the Qualtrics link on the social media platforms: Facebook and LinkedIn as well as by direct emails to friends and family. Participants were randomly allocated to one of the four 'conditions'. i.e., the task complexity (high/low) of the customisation tool and the nature of the recipient of the customised bag (self-gifting vs. interpersonal gifting) (see Section 4.5.1 above). All

respondents were asked to customise a 'Longchamp bag' on the official 'My Pliage' customisation website and then revert to the Qualtrics web page to complete the survey about their feelings during the customisation task they had just performed. Given that the author's contacts are mostly female, it is assumed that respondents were mostly female. However, since the link was also posted on social media platforms and given that the survey completion was anonymous, this assumption cannot be verified.

For the pilot study, the author recruited 120 female respondents, from the Prolific online panel, employing the same filters that were applied to the main study (see section 4.6.2). The 120 female participants were randomly allocated to one of the experimental groups by Qualtrics. The full results of the pilot study are detailed in section 5.2.

Some relevant amendments in the scenarios and questionnaires were made based on the results given by the testing stage. Apart from minor changes such as order of questions and the addition of some demographic questions, the most important amendments related to the following three aspects:

(i)   The recipient of the customised gift in the experimental groups

(ii) The customisation options due to Longchamp's amendments on its customisation page

(iii) The change of dependant variable in the conceptual framework, from customisation intention to purchase intention

Amendments made to questionnaires and scenarios as a result of the pre-test and pilot study are detailed in section 4.6.1 below.

4.6.1 Experimental scenarios

The experimental scenarios used in this study were developed after extensive pre-testing in several separate stages using independent samples to ensure that the scenarios were being perceived as realistic. A few changes had to be made to the scenarios and to the questionnaires before drafting the final version for the main study as explained below:

Recipient of the customised bag

In the scenarios used for the pre-test and the pilot study, the manipulation of the recipient of the customised gift was different from the recipient eventually used in the main study. The initial intention was to compare the impact of close tie vs. distant tie on the perceived complexity and anxiety. In the pre-test and pilot study, the close tie was operationalised as a

very close friend or family member, with distant tie being operationalised as *a colleague you do not know well at a personal level.*

However, pre-tests results indicated that the respondents failed to show variation on the level of perceived complexity and anxiety. The manipulation did not work as intended.

Therefore, in the main study, the recipients of the customised bag were changed to oneself (self-gift giving) operationalised as *a gift to yourself* vs. a recipient (interpersonal gift giving), operationalised as *a gift for their best friend.* As such, the expectation was that the analysis would show more pertinent results with greater variance.

Customisation task

Longchamp modified the layout of their customisation page "My Pliage" between the preliminary tests and the final study. The options to customise some features of the bag had been slightly amended. Hence the brief and questionnaires had to be updated accordingly.

In addition, to enhance the validity of the results of the main study and contrary to the preliminary tests, a box to copy-paste the link of the customised bag was added in the final version of the questionnaires. As such, the author could check visually the customised bags and be reassured that the respondents had performed the customisation task properly before answering the questionnaire. Screen shots of customised bags (high and low complexity groups) designed by the respondents of the main study are available in Appendix D.

From customisation intention to purchase intention

The outcome of the model changed between the pilot study and the main study from customisation intention to purchase intention. The main reason for this change is that purchase intention (or willingness to pay) is a broader construct and has been used more widely in prior literature in the field of customisation. As stated in section 3. of the literature review, many prior studies (e.g., Merle *et al.,* 2008; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009) have chosen 'intention to purchase the customised product' as an outcome of their conceptual framework. Similarly, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Moreau, *et al.* (2020) used 'willingness to pay' as one of the outcomes of their conceptual framework. Furthermore, from a managerial viewpoint, the purchase intention is a more salient outcome than the customisation intention of the customers.

4.6.2 Final questionnaire

Four survey questionnaires were set up in Qualtrics. The four Qualtrics surveys were uploaded on Prolific, the participants recruitment panel. Survey participants were screened by applying the following filters:

FILTERS CATEGORY	APPLIED FILTERS
GENDER	Female Only
AGE	Minimum 18 years old
COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE	UK
NATIONALITY	UK
MINIMUM DEGREE COMPLETED	A-Level
PERSONAL INCOME IN GBP	Over 20K
PARTICIPATION IN MY PREVIOUS STUDIES	None

After applying the selected filters to the total panel of the respondents on the Prolific platform, approx. 5200 participants met the criteria for the surveys. To respect the research budget, four hundred respondents (100 per study) were randomly allocated to four experimental groups by Prolific with the corresponding instructions for each of the group. (See example of scenario and questionnaire in Appendix C).

Survey flow chart

With the exception of the nature of the recipient and the number of bag features to customise, the four groups received the exact same questionnaire. It comprises five main parts (highlighted in grey in the chart below) relating to the conceptual framework.

i) Questions on familiarity with online customisation task

ii) Questions on familiarity with Longchamp brand

iii) Questions on the level of perceived complexity based on scales by Huffman and Kahn (1998) and Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer (2009)

iv) Self-assessment of level of perceived anxiety based on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011)

v) Self-assessment of self-design skill based on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011)

vi)   Questions on level of perception of each of the five dimensions value dimension of customisation based on Merle *et al.* (2010) and of perceived social value based on scale by Sweeney and Soutar (2001)

vii)   Questions relating to their intention to purchase the customised bag based on Merle *et al.* (2008)

Figure 5. Survey Flow Chart

Agreement to participate	Q1 Experience with online customisation	Q2,3 Familiarity with Longchamp brand	Instructions for customisation task	Click on Link to "Pliage personalised" page	Q4 Paste URL link of the Customised bag

Q5,6 Attention check	Q7 Perceived Complexity	Q8 Perceived Anxiety	Q9 System check	Q10 Self-perceived design skill	Q11 a, b,c,d,e,f Customisation value 6 dimensions	Q12 Purchase Intention

4.7   Ethics and the researcher

Some ethical considerations must be addressed during data collection. Some considerations are more specific to in-lab experiments. For online surveys, the following main ethical considerations are considered (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020):

- The researcher must respect the rights of the participants: confidentiality and privacy.
- The purpose of the study should be explained to them.
- Personal nor intrusive information should not be solicited.
- Self-esteem and self-respect of the subjects should not be violated.
- No one should be forced to respond to the survey.
- There should be no misrepresentation or distortion in reporting the data collected during the study.

For the intended research, the author applied for an 'ethical review of research projects involving human participants' and received the approval of the Kingston Business School's ethics committee in 2019.

4.8 Data Analysis Method

Given the complexity of the structure of the proposed conceptual framework, structural equation modelling (SEM) analytical technique, and more specifically, partial least squares structural modelling (PLS-SEM) was the analytical technique mainly employed in this thesis (see below). This technique has been widely used in marketing and consumer research (e.g., Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Yoo and Park, 2016). Among its advantages, SEM enables the simultaneous analysis of measurement (i.e., constructs and indicators) and structural models (i.e., hypothesised relationships between constructs) (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Moreover, to complement the results given by the software SmartPLS, ANOVA analyses were conducted using SPSS.

Rationale for the use of PLS-SEM

The literature distinguishes two main approaches to SEM analysis – covariance-based (CB-SEM) and variance-based (PLS-SEM). Some of the distinctive characteristics of CB-SEM and PLS-SEM are briefly discussed below:

Purpose: CB-SEM focuses on theory testing by means of estimating how close the estimates of a theoretical covariance matrix are to the empirical covariance matrix (Reinartz, Haenlein and Henseler, 2009). On the other hand, PLS-SEM is intended for causal-predictive analysis in complex models, when there is relatively less theoretical knowledge (Joreskog and Wold, 1982). Whilst the objective of CB-SEM is to reproduce the theoretical covariance matrix without focusing on the explained variance, '*the goal of PLS focuses is maximizing the explained variance of the endogenous latent variables in the PLS path model'* (Hair *et al.,* 2016, p.105). The strength of the relationships between latent variables is represented by path coefficients and these coefficients are the results of regressions of each endogenous latent variable on their direct predecessor constructs.

Explanatory research: If the purpose of the research is to test a theory (confirmatory research), CB-SEM will be better choice. Otherwise, to conduct explanatory research or hypothesis testing, PLS-SEM is deemed more appropriate (McIntosh, Edwards, and Antonakis, 2014). The aim of the thesis is to explain the causal nature of the many relationships between the variables of the complex proposed model. In sum, PLS-SEM is more relevant in the exploratory stage for theory building and prediction.

Minimum sample size requirements: CB-SEM typically requires a minimum of 200 observations (Reinartz, Haenlein, and Henseler, 2009). PLS-SEM, by contrast, is robust even with samples including as little as 50 observations (Haenlein and Kaplan, 2004). Indeed, prior studies concluded that the PLS-SEM method performed well with small sample sizes (e.g., Chin and Newsted, 1999; Hui and Wold, 1982; Hair *et al*., 2016). Furthermore, compared with CB-SEM, PLS-SEM has higher levels of statistical power for complex model structures. Henseler *et al.* (2014) show that problems often are encountered when using CB-SEM on complex models, especially when the sample size is limited. Finally, CB-SEM encounters identification and convergence issues when formative measures are involved (Diamantopoulos and Riefler, 2011).

To conclude, PLS-SEM's attractiveness over CB-SEM is that it allows researchers to estimate very complex models with many constructs and indicator variables, especially when prediction is the goal of the analysis. PLS-SEM allows for more flexibility in terms of data requirements and the specification of relationships between constructs and indicator variables. Unlike CB-SEM that assumes equal weights for all indicators, PLS-SEM allows each indicator to vary in its contribution to the latent variable. Given the complexity of the model of this research, with large number of variables and indicators, considering the advantages of PLS-SEM and the focus of this thesis on prediction, PLS-SEM analytical technique was recommended for this research, using SmartPLS statistical software.

SmartPLS Statistical Software

CB-SEM is typically conducted using software such as AMOS and LISREL. Variance-based SEM is typically associated with the partial least square approach to SEM (PLS-SEM) and SmartPLS (Chin 1998; Hair *et al*., 2016), an easy-to-use software with graphical user interface. Following best practice guidelines on how to conduct PLS-SEM (e.g., Chin 1998; Hair *et al.,* 2016), the analysis was performed in two stages. First, the measurement model was inspected. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed by means of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability estimates (Henseler, Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009). Convergent validity of the scale items was established by inspecting the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). The discriminant validity among the constructs included in the conceptual framework was assessed by employing the Fornell-Larcker criterion (1981) and the heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations approach (Henseler, Ringle and Sarstedt, 2015). Second, the structural

model was assessed. The R-square, Q-square, f-square values were inspected, along with the size and significance of the path coefficients. A detailed discussion of the analysis follows in Chapter 5.

Analysis of Moderating Effects

The literature refers to two main approaches to testing moderation in PLS-SEM. The first approach is the product indicator approach. This approach allows testing of latent moderating variables (Henseler and Chin, 2010). Based on this approach, a product term is created by using the indicators of the latent independent and moderator variables. The product term serves as indicator of a new latent variable in the model, namely the interaction term. The product indicator approach is recommended when using reflective measurement models. For formative measurement models, a two-stage approach is preferred (Henseler and Chin, 2010). This thesis does not include formative specifications. Hence, the two-stage approach was discarded. Further, Henseler and Chin (2010) recommend the use of the product indicator approach when the objective of the analysis is to find an estimate for the true parameter of an interaction effect and to describe the hypothesised relationships.

The second approach to testing moderation in PLS-SEM is the multi-group analysis (MGA). MGA allows testing for moderation of categorical variables or continuous variables converted into two or more artificial groups. Parametric and nonparametric procedures to conducting MGA exist (Sarstedt, Henseler and Ringle, 2011). Chin (2000) notes that both procedures are contended to work effectively when using large samples. The same author suggests that MGA should, however, be avoided when the moderating variable is continuous, as MGA may complicate power detection. In this thesis, the nature of the recipient (self vs. other) is the potential moderator which is categorical. It is expected to impact all the relationships of the conceptual framework. Given the above, the multi-group analysis to testing for moderation was deemed appropriate. Chapter 5 of this thesis includes a discussion of the analysis and results of the pilot and the main study.

Chapter 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Once the research instrument has been developed and empirical data were collected, the next step entailed the analysis of data. Data analysis represents a pivotal step in the research process, whereby the research hypotheses and the conceptual framework as a whole are tested. Results from the data analysis reveal whether the research hypotheses are empirically confirmed or not. To ensure that data relevant to answering the research objectives are collected, the data collection instrument is typically pre-tested, the psychometric properties of the measures are established, and a preliminary testing of the conceptual framework is carried out (Malhotra, Nunan, and Birks, 2017). The above steps represent best practice guidelines in conducting business research. Consistent with the above guidelines, the following sections present the analysis of data collected across the pilot study and the main study.

5.2 Pilot Study

5.2.1 Purpose of the pilot study

The purpose of the pilot study was to test the questionnaires on respondents recruited by Prolific and to check the efficacy of the experimental manipulations of task complexity and the nature of the recipient. Above all, the pilot study was intended to identify any potential problems with the data collection, the conceptual framework and to ensure that all measurements and parameters met the benchmark to pursue with the main study.

5.2.2 Operationalisation of the pilot study

The operationalisation of the pilot study was the same as the main study. The same filters as the main study were applied on the Prolific Platform to recruit eligible participants which were then randomly allocated to the 4 experimental groups to customise the bag and answer the questionnaire.

The total valid data set was distributed as follows:

- Experimental group 1 (High Complexity/Close Tie): 29 cases

- Experimental group 2 (High Complexity/ Distant Tie): 31 cases

- Experimental group 3 (Low Complexity/Close Tie): 27 cases

- Experimental group 4 (Low Complexity/ Distant Tie): 32 cases

- Total participants: 119 cases

5.2.3 Analysis and results of the pilot study

As stated above, one of the purposes of the pilot study was to check if the manipulations of complexity and nature of the recipient had worked across all experimental groups. In other words, if the task complexity, COMPX (i.e., high vs. low) had any impact on perceived complexity (CO). Also, if the recipient, RECPT (i.e., Self vs. other) had any effect on the level of perceived anxiety (AX) and on the value dimensions.

To run these checks, two data analysis methods were used using the same data set: ANOVA analysis using SPSS and PLS analysis, including a multi-group analysis using SmartPLS.

First Manipulation check: Task complexity (COMPX - High vs. Low) on Perceived Complexity (CO)

The results of the first ANOVA analysis show that the manipulation of the complexity level has worked. The task complexity (COMPX – High vs. Low) had a significant effect on the complexity perceived by the respondents (CO) when undertaking the customisation task. The tests of between subjects effects show a significant effect, $p= .035$. Group 1 respondents, allocated to the high complexity condition perceived significantly higher complexity ($M= 2.70$) than Group 2 respondents, allocated to the low complexity condition ($M= 2.19$). Respondents perceived higher complexity when they had to choose among 7 features vs. only 2 features.

Furthermore, the results of the first multi-group analysis (MGA) showed only one significant path between creative achievement and purchase intention $(p=0.039)$. Otherwise, the task complexity (High vs. Low) does not seem to have any impact on any relationships of the model. In other words, whether the respondents customise the bag with the high complexity tool (7 features) or with the low complexity tool (only 2 features), there is no significant impact anxiety nor on their perceived value.

Therefore, the pilot study results show that the first manipulation of the task complexity COMPX, high vs low has worked since it has a significant impact on perceived complexity. However, the pilot study also reveals that contrary to expectations, COMPX does not have a significant effect on any relationships of the model.

<u>Second Manipulation check: Impact of nature of the recipient</u>

According to the results of the ANOVA analysis, the type of recipient, does have a significant effect on the perception of anxiety (AX), $p=.011$. Looking at the means, when the respondents customise the bag for their colleague (distant tie), they feel slightly more anxious (*M*= 3.24, *SD*=1.6), than when they customise the bag for their best friend (close tie) (*M*=2.56, *SD*= 1.36).

However, the results of the multi-group analysis showed only non-significant paths between anxiety and all six value dimensions irrespective of the nature of the recipient (Close vs. distant tie). In other words, the impact of the nature of the recipient on the relationship between anxiety and the value dimensions is insignificant. Contrary to expectations, whether the respondents customise the bag as a gift for their best friend or for a distant colleague, there was no significant impact on their perceived value. Therefore, the manipulation of nature of the recipient did not give the results expected. This finding will be checked during the main study using the full dataset.

Otherwise, all measurements and parameters results met the benchmark which provides confidence to pursue with the main study.

5.3 Main Study

5.3.1 Purpose of the main study

The key purpose of main study was to check if all the hypotheses were supported by the results of the analyses. Furthermore, regarding the manipulations, the pilot study results confirmed that task complexity (COMPX, high vs. low) had a significant impact on perceived complexity, hence the manipulation had worked. However, the MGA conducted during the pilot study showed no evidence of moderating effect of task complexity. Hence, the main study only focused on measuring the impact of perceived complexity, measured as a continuous variable of the complexity felt by the consumer.

Regarding, the manipulation of the nature of the recipient (RECPT), i.e., self vs. other, the description of recipient of the gift was changed between the pilot study and the main study. As explained in section 4.6.2, in the pilot study, the description of the recipients was 'close tie', operationalised as a *very close friend or family member,* versus. 'distant tie', operationalised as *a colleague you do not know well at a personal level.* However, since the results of the multi-

group analysis of the pilot study did not show pertinent results, it was decided to change the descriptions of the two groups of recipients in the main study. Hence, the recipients of the customised bag were changed to 'oneself' (self-gift giving) operationalised as *a gift to yourself* versus 'other' (interpersonal gift giving), operationalised as *a gift for their best friend.* As such, the expectation was that this change of recipients of the customised bag would show greater variance between groups in the multi-group analysis of the main study.

In sum, although the manipulation of the nature of the recipient did not work in the pilot study, this important change of description of recipients in the experimental scenarios justified new multi-group analyses during the main study, with the hope to obtain significant moderating effect of the nature of the recipient on the relationships.

5.3.2 Operationalisation of the main study

The operationalisation of the final study was the same as the pilot study, except for the changes discussed in chapter 4. The same pre-screeners as the pilot study were applied on the Prolific Platform to recruit eligible participants which were then randomly allocated to the 4 experimental groups to customise the bag and answer the questionnaire. Before downloading the full data from Qualtrics, the researcher checked on Prolific the time spent by each respondent to complete the customisation and the questionnaire to identify the respondents who might not have spent adequate amount of time to complete the survey with their full attention. Alexandrov, Lilly, and Babakus (2013) advocates removal of respondents indulging in speeding. Therefore, in this study any respondent completing the customisation task and the questionnaire in less than 6 minutes was removed from the dataset. The researcher was able to reject participant for speeding directly on the Prolific website. As soon as the researcher would reject a respondent's questionnaire, Prolific would automatically publish the survey again until another participant would join and complete the survey to replace the rejected one. Each of the four surveys was considered as completed once we reached a total of around 100 checked and accepted participants and reached the maximum budget.

Overall, 452 surveys were downloaded from the Qualtrics platform. Once uploaded on a csv. file, the data set was checked. Before conducting any analysis, the researcher examined the data for any suspicious response patterns in an attempt to identify bogus respondents. First, all the data sets were examined visually by the researcher for straight lining, whereby a respondent marks the same response for a high proportion of questions (Hair *et al*., 2016). Second, the researcher checked that the respondents had answered all the questions, and third,

that they copied and pasted the link to the customised bag to ensure they had effectively customised the bag and they did not just directly answer the questionnaire. Fourth, the answers to the system check were also examined. Based on these checks, 47 responses were removed from the data set (Group 1: 13, Group 2: 14, Group 3: 15, Group 4: 5 respondents were rejected). Responses were deemed not valid as detailed below:

In the experimental group 1, the initial sample was n=110, thirteen respondents were deleted, eleven for missing data, one for failing the system check and one for not having pasted the link to the customised bag in the text box as required meaning we could not check if the respondent had customised the bag. Consequently, the total usable sample was n=97.

In the experimental group 2, the original data set had 117 cases. Fourteen respondents were deleted, ten for not answering all the questions, one for failing the system check, one for straight lining, two for not pasting the link to the customised bag in the text box as required meaning we could not check if the respondent had customised the bag. Thus, the total usable sample was n=103.

In the experimental group 3, the initial sample was n= 119. Fifteen were not considered as valid. One for straight lining, nine did not answer most of the questions, one did not pass the system check and four respondents did not paste the link to the customised bag in the text box. Hence the total usable sample was n=104.

In the experimental group 4, the initial sample was n=106. Only five were deleted. Three for not answering all the questions, one for failing the system check, two for not pasting the link to the customised bag in the text box and one for straight lining. Therefore, the total usable sample was n=101.

The total valid data set was distributed as follows:

- Experimental group 1 (High complexity/Self-Giving): 97 cases
- Experimental group 2 (High Complexity/ Gift-Giving): 103 cases
- Experimental group 3 (Low Complexity/Self-Giving): 104 cases
- Experimental group 4 (Low Complexity/ Gift -Giving): 101 cases
- Total participants: 405 cases

Overall, 405 responses were retained and used for statistical analysis. The demographic profile of the respondents is presented below followed by the assessment of the measurement and structural models, leading to hypotheses testing.

5.3.3 Demographic profile of the respondents

The demographic profile of the participants was defined by the filters applied on the Prolific platform as detailed below. Based on prior research in customisation, only female respondents took part in the survey.

Demographic profile of the participants	
GENDER:	Female only
AGE:	From 18 years old
COUNTRY OF RESIDENCE:	UK
NATIONALITY:	UK
MINIMUM DEGREE COMPLETED:	A-Level
PERSONAL INCOME IN GBP:	over 20K
Had not participated in any of my previous studies	

After collecting the final data, the demographic profile of the 405 female respondents could be analysed in more details. Most of the female respondents (77%) were in their 30s to 40s. More specifically, 46% of the respondents across the groups were in the age group 26-34, 31% were in the age group 35-44. Half of the total sample (50%) has obtained an undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other). 28% have a graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other). About half of the participants have an annual personal income in the range of £30,000 to £50,000 per year, 33% earn between £30-39 000 and 15%, between £40-49,000.

Table 14. Demographics of Respondents of the Main Study

Variable	Category	Group 1 (HC-SG)	Group 2 (HC-GG)	Group 3 (LC-SG)	Group 4 (LC-GG)	TOTAL GROUPS
Age	18-25	6.2%	5.8%	1%	11.1%	**6%**
	26-34	47.4%	39.8%	51.9%	44.4%	**46%**
	35-44	29.9%	35%	30.8%	28.3%	**31%**
	45-54	14.4%	12.6%	13.5%	13.1%	**13%**
	55-60	2.1%	6.8%	2.9%	3%	**4%**
Highest Degree Obtained	Secondary education (e.g., GCSE)	2%	0%	0%	0%	**1%**
	High school diploma/ A-levels	8%	11%	11%	11%	**10%**
	Technical/community college	5%	10%	9%	5%	**7%**
	Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)	58%	38%	52%	53%	**50%**
	Graduate degree (MA/MSc/Mphil/other)	25%	36%	25%	27%	**28%**
	Doctorate degree (PhD/other)	2%	6%	4%	4%	**4%**
Personal Income in GBP	Less than £30,000	31%	5%	36%	43%	**28%**
	£30,000 - £39,999	43%	34%	38%	35%	**37%**
	£40,000 - £49,999	14%	29%	13%	11%	**17%**
	£50,000 - £59,999	4%	17%	10%	7%	**9%**
	£60,000 - £69,999	1%	5%	3%	2%	**3%**
	£70,000 - £79,999	3%	3%	0%	1%	**2%**
	£80,000 - £89,999	2%	5%	0%	0%	**2%**
	£90,000 - £99,999	0%	2%	1%	0%	**1%**
	Over £100,000	1%	1%	0%	2%	**1%**

Note: The figures have been rounded off to the nearest decimal

5.3.4 Analysis and Results of the Main Study

In the next section, the measurement model, followed by the structural model assessment results are presented. Then, the analysis of the hypotheses testing of the direct and indirect effects are examined.

5.3.4.1 Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model assessment is a necessary step in PLS-SEM analysis. *'Model estimation delivers empirical measures of the relationships between the indicators and the constructs'* (Hair *et al.,* 2016, p.105). Valid estimates are obtained from the structural model assessment, as long as the measurement model assessment provides evidence of the measures' reliability and validity. Hence, the measurement model assessment was conducted as part of the main study, and with the use of a dataset of 405 respondents allocated randomly to the 4 experimental groups.

The reliability of measures was assessed by running the PLS algorithm following the path weighting scheme, in line with recommendations by Hair *et al.* (2016).

Cronbach's alpha

The traditional criterion for evaluating internal consistency is Cronbach's alpha, which provides an estimate of the reliability based on the inter-correlations of the observed indicator variables (Hair *et al.*, 2016). The value of α can range from 0 (no reliability) to 1 (perfect reliability) (Hair et *al.*, 2016). The most widely accepted benchmark value in the extant literature to assess internal consistency is 0.70 posited by Nunnally and Bernstein (1994). Results show that all constructs for the sample displayed satisfactory levels of reliability, with Cronbach's alpha ranging between 0.79 and 0.97. Cronbach's alpha assumes that all the indicators are equally reliable, i.e., all the indicators have equal outer loadings on the construct (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Furthermore, Cronbach's alpha is sensitive to the number of items in the scale. For instance, as the number of items on the scale increase, it is likely that one gets a larger value of α because one has lot of items on the scale and not because the scale is reliable (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Moreover, Cronbach's alpha tends to underestimate the internal consistency reliability, thus Cronbach's alpha might be used as a conservative measure of internal consistency (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Due to Cronbach's alpha limitations, this study employs an additional measure of internal consistency which is the composite reliability (p_c).

Composite Reliability

Composite reliability like Cronbach's alpha varies from 0 and 1 with higher values indicating higher levels of reliability (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Values above the benchmark of 0.70 are considered satisfactory. All composite reliability (p_c) values ranging between 0.87 and 0.98, well above the recommended threshold of 0.7. Therefore, the internal consistency of the scales was confirmed (Hair *et al.,* 2016).

Table 15. Internal Consistency and Reliability Results

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability
Perceived complexity	0.852	0.852	0.910
Anxiety	0.865	0.872	0.917
Design Skill	0.890	0.901	0.924
Utilitarian	0.892	0.896	0.933
Uniqueness	0.793	0.813	0.878
Hedonic	0.974	0.974	0.983
Self-expressiveness	0.916	0.917	0.947
Creative Achievement	0.877	0.877	0.942
Social Value	0.923	0.924	0.945
Purchase Intention	0.969	0.969	0.985

Construct Validity

Construct validity is the '*extent to which a set of measured items actually reflects the theoretical latent construct those items are designed to measure*' (Hair *et al.* 2006 p. 776). Evidence of construct validity provides confidence that item measures taken from a sample represent the true score that exists in the population (Hair *et al.*, 2016). Construct validity is assessed through convergent and discriminant validity (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020).

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity essentially concerns the extent to which different measures of the same construct converge on the intended construct (Mathieu and Taylor, 2006). In the extant literature, a common measure to establish convergent validity at the construct level is average variance extracted (AVE) developed by Fornell and Larcker (1981). An AVE value of 0.50 or higher indicates a sufficient degree of convergent validity implying that the latent variable is able to explain more than half of the variance of its indicators, however if AVE is less than .50 then the variance due to measurement error is larger than the variance captured by the construct and the validity of the individual indicators as well as that of latent variable is questionable (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Henseler Ringle and Sinkovics, 2009; Hair *et al*., 2016). All the constructs demonstrate adequate convergent validity with the AVE scores above the recommended threshold of 0.50, as reported in Table 16 (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 16. Convergent Validity Results

	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Perceived complexity	0.772
Anxiety	0.787
Design Skill	0.752
Utilitarian	0.823
Uniqueness	0.706
Hedonic	0.950
Self-expressiveness	0.856
Creative Achievement	0.891
Social Value	0.813
Purchase Intention	0.970

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity refers to the extent to which measures of different constructs are empirically and theoretically distinguishable (Mathieu and Taylor, 2006). Establishing discriminant validity implies that a construct is unique and captures phenomena not represented by other constructs in the model (Hair *et al.,* 2016). In the extant literature, two methods of demonstrating discriminant validity have been proposed. The first method of assessing

discriminant validity is by examining the cross-loadings of the indicators. In this method, indicators outer loadings on the associated construct should be greater than all its loadings on other constructs. The results reported in Table 17 below show that indicators outer loadings on the associated construct are greater than all their loadings on the other constructs. For clarity, the outer loadings are highlighted in **bold.** Thus, we establish discriminant validity by the first method.

Table 17. Discriminant Validity Results - *Cross loadings of the indicators method*

	Anxiety	Creative Achievement	Design Skill	Hedonic	Perceived complexity	Purchase Intention	Self-expressiveness	Social Value	Uniqueness	Utilitarian
AX1	**0.846**	-0.125	-0.203	-0.338	0.683	-0.175	-0.143	0.005	-0.043	-0.180
AX2	**0.888**	-0.129	-0.255	-0.285	0.506	-0.137	-0.167	-0.054	-0.053	-0.172
AX3	**0.926**	-0.182	-0.275	-0.411	0.559	-0.224	-0.207	-0.101	-0.113	-0.238
CA3	-0.169	**0.944**	0.217	0.660	-0.148	0.531	0.544	0.497	0.426	0.514
CA4	-0.142	**0.943**	0.229	0.609	-0.130	0.525	0.624	0.507	0.478	0.539
CO1	0.552	-0.099	-0.172	-0.333	**0.894**	-0.165	-0.145	-0.039	-0.043	-0.187
CO2	0.569	-0.167	-0.248	-0.407	**0.904**	-0.194	-0.201	-0.060	-0.084	-0.248
CO3	0.617	-0.122	-0.242	-0.306	**0.836**	-0.198	-0.142	-0.040	-0.046	-0.210
DS1	-0.246	0.224	**0.885**	0.292	-0.224	0.238	0.258	0.222	0.089	0.252
DS2	-0.279	0.228	**0.890**	0.321	-0.231	0.230	0.284	0.241	0.076	0.260
DS3	-0.196	0.144	**0.806**	0.241	-0.212	0.220	0.175	0.198	0.080	0.223
DS4	-0.225	0.212	**0.886**	0.297	-0.213	0.239	0.288	0.241	0.124	0.239
H1	-0.388	0.631	0.323	**0.970**	-0.402	0.610	0.546	0.461	0.455	0.556
H2	-0.382	0.667	0.328	**0.984**	-0.384	0.630	0.576	0.481	0.464	0.571
H3	-0.381	0.669	0.327	**0.970**	-0.374	0.626	0.595	0.477	0.443	0.578
PI1	-0.208	0.563	0.273	0.633	-0.214	**0.985**	0.595	0.478	0.454	0.649
PI2	-0.194	0.539	0.253	0.624	-0.205	**0.985**	0.596	0.480	0.434	0.640
SE2	-0.196	0.560	0.268	0.521	-0.173	0.546	**0.915**	0.529	0.414	0.593
SE3	-0.196	0.626	0.273	0.579	-0.168	0.571	**0.950**	0.593	0.473	0.616
SE4	-0.149	0.531	0.276	0.529	-0.173	0.562	**0.911**	0.519	0.442	0.593
SV1	-0.058	0.491	0.254	0.446	-0.016	0.413	0.560	**0.905**	0.384	0.371
SV2	-0.049	0.492	0.222	0.430	-0.021	0.446	0.563	**0.934**	0.321	0.358
SV3	-0.076	0.444	0.259	0.476	-0.129	0.468	0.489	**0.858**	0.377	0.430
SV4	-0.016	0.492	0.202	0.389	-0.014	0.419	0.520	**0.907**	0.333	0.375
U1	-0.211	0.479	0.310	0.565	-0.190	0.635	0.638	0.434	0.365	**0.873**
U4	-0.209	0.528	0.209	0.507	-0.252	0.550	0.525	0.338	0.373	**0.911**
U5	-0.186	0.513	0.237	0.507	-0.228	0.584	0.591	0.380	0.382	**0.936**
Un2	-0.066	0.470	0.090	0.437	0.003	0.417	0.433	0.382	**0.874**	0.338
Un4	-0.062	0.412	0.073	0.412	-0.099	0.411	0.463	0.346	**0.869**	0.415
Un5	-0.077	0.306	0.113	0.309	-0.077	0.291	0.287	0.246	**0.774**	0.273

However, this criterion is considered relatively liberal in terms of establishing discriminant validity (Hair *et al.,* 2016) and thus we will additionally employ the second method called the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criteria to demonstrate discriminant validity. This approach compares the square root of the AVE values with the latent variable correlations. Specifically, the square root of each construct's AVE should be greater than its highest correlation with any other construct (Hair *et al*., 2016). Results summarised in Table 18 show the values in **bold** along the diagonal are the square root of the AVE of the latent variables. Off diagonal elements are correlations between the latent variables. The AVE exceeds the squared correlations between

all pairs of constructs in support of discriminant validity**.** In conclusion, we establish the discriminant validity of the constructs by both the cross-loadings approach and the Fornell-Larcker (1981) criteria.

Table 18. Discriminant Validity Results – *Fornell- Larcker Method*

	Anxiety	Creative Achievement	Design Skill	Hedonic	Perceived complexity	Purchase Intention	Self-expressiveness	Social Value	Uniqueness	Utilitarian
Anxiety	**0.887**									
Creative Achievement	-0.165	**0.944**								
Design Skill	-0.275	0.237	**0.867**							
Hedonic	-0.393	0.673	0.334	**0.975**						
Perceived complexity	0.662	-0.148	-0.253	-0.397	**0.879**					
Purchase Intention	-0.204	0.560	0.267	0.638	-0.213	**0.985**				
Self-expressiveness	-0.195	0.619	0.294	0.587	-0.185	0.605	**0.925**			
Social Value	-0.056	0.532	0.261	0.485	-0.053	0.486	0.591	**0.901**		
Uniqueness	-0.080	0.479	0.106	0.466	-0.065	0.451	0.479	0.393	**0.840**	
Utilitarian	-0.223	0.558	0.281	0.583	-0.245	0.654	0.649	0.427	0.412	**0.907**

An alternative approach to assess discriminant validity is the Heterotrait-Monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT). If the HTMT value is below 0.90, discriminant validity has been established between two reflective constructs (Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt, 2015). As per Table 19 below, all the values between the constructs display value below the threshold of .90, therefore confirming discriminant validity.

Table 19. Discriminant Validity Results– *HTMT Ratio*

	Anxiety	Creative Achievement	Design Skill	Hedonic	Perceived complexity	Purchase Intention	Self-expressiveness	Social Value	Uniqueness	Utilitarian
Anxiety	1.000									
Creative Achievement	0.188	1.000								
Design Skill	0.311	0.264	1.000							
Hedonic	0.424	0.728	0.356	1.000						
Perceived complexity	0.762	0.170	0.289	0.436	1.000					
Purchase Intention	0.220	0.607	0.288	0.657	0.233	1.000				
Self-expressiveness	0.219	0.690	0.321	0.621	0.210	0.642	1.000			
Social Value	0.074	0.592	0.285	0.510	0.057	0.512	0.643	1.000		
Uniqueness	0.097	0.565	0.130	0.523	0.090	0.506	0.550	0.450	1.000	
Utilitarian	0.251	0.632	0.311	0.622	0.282	0.699	0.713	0.465	0.483	1.000

5.3.4.2 Structural Model Assessment

As part of the structural model assessment, the following four criteria were assessed: (1) the coefficient of determination (R^2 value), which is a measure of the model's predictive accuracy, (2) the Q-square value (Q^2), which is a measure of the model's predictive relevance, and (3) the size, direction and significance of the structural paths.

Predictive accuracy and relevance of the model

The R-square coefficient of determination (R^2) is a widely used measure to evaluate the predictive accuracy of the structural model (Hair *et al.,* 2016). In disciplines such as consumer behaviour, the R-square values need to be positive to consider the model as predictive (Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics, 2009; Hair *et al.,* 2016).

Besides R-square, the Stone-Geisser's Q-square value (Q^2) is a useful measure of the predictive power of the model (Stone 1974; Geisser 1974). Consistent with Hair *et al.* (2016), the Q-square value is calculated by means of blindfolding procedure, which is a predictive sample reuse technique. Following the blindfolding procedure, data points in the endogenous construct's indicators are omitted based on the blindfold omission distance set by the researcher and parameters are estimated based on the remaining data points (Chin, 1998; Hair *et al.* 2016). SmartPLS software runs the blindfolding procedure as many times as indicated by the blindfold omission distance. When using a large sample, Hair *et al. (*2016) recommends setting the omission distance at a value ranging between five and ten. Importantly, the omission distance should not result in an integer when the total number of cases is divided by the omission distance. The blindfolding procedure can be used when dealing with endogenous single-item or multi-item constructs with reflective measurement (Hair *et al*., 2016). There are two approaches to calculating Q-square – cross-validated redundancy and cross-validated communality. Whilst the former approach relies upon estimates of both measurement and structural models, the latter approach includes estimates for the endogenous constructs only. The cross-validated redundancy approach fits with the assumptions of PLS-SEM and it is, therefore, recommended (Hair *et al.,* 2016). A cross-validated redundancy measure (Q2) above 0.5 indicates high predictive validity of the model (Chin, 2010).

In this thesis, all research constructs included reflective measurement. Hence, the blindfolding procedure could be used. The Q-square value was calculated via blindfolding procedure set at omission distance of seven, which is the default omission distance set by Smart-PLS. The results indicate that the structural model has predictive explanatory power. All Q-square values are positive ranging from the lowest 0.009 for uniqueness value to the highest 0.534 for purchase intention (see Table 20). Further, apart from purchase intention and anxiety, the Q-square value for the other endogenous constructs in the model was below 0.5, thus the model holds predictive relevance although quite low. Following the analysis of the predictive power of the model, the size and significance of the individual structural paths were inspected, as further discussed below.

Table 20. Predictive accuracy results

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Anxiety	0.451	0.448	0.343
Utilitarian	0.102	0.098	0.079
Uniqueness	0.014	0.009	0.009
Self-expressiveness	0.101	0.096	0.085
Hedonic	0.210	0.206	0.196
Creative Achievement	0.067	0.062	0.055
Social Value	0.068	0.064	0.053
Purchase Intention	0.560	0.553	0.534

Size and significance of structural paths

PLS-SEM does not make assumptions that data are normally distributed (Chin, 2010). Consequently, parametric significance tests cannot be used to inspect the significance of the loadings and/or structural paths (Hair *et al.,* 2016). Alternatively, a nonparametric bootstrap procedure is followed (Chin, 1998). Hair *et al.* (2016) explain that, based on the bootstrapping procedure, *'a large number of subsamples (i.e., bootstrap samples) are drawn from the original sample with replacement'* (Hair *et al*., 2016, p. 130). The same authors indicate that the number of bootstrap samples is typically higher than the number of observations, and it ranges between 500 and 5,000.

In this thesis, the size, direction and significance of the structural paths were inspected following bootstrapping procedure set at 1,000 subsamples and at a significance level of 5%. Most individual paths were in the hypothesised direction and significant, with the exception of four paths. The paths between anxiety and uniqueness ($p = .269$), between anxiety and social value ($p = .740$), and between design skill and uniqueness ($p = .096$) that showed *p*- values over significance threshold of .05.   Finally, the path between creative achievement and purchase intention is very slightly over 0.05, at 0.0585. All other individual paths were highly significant (see Table 21).

Table 21. Summary of Significance of Structural Paths Results – Direct Effects

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety	0.633	0.633	0.047	0.000*
Design Skill -> Anxiety	-0.114	-0.117	0.052	0.027*
Anxiety -> Utilitarian	-0.158	-0.155	0.053	0.003*
Anxiety -> Uniqueness	-0.055	-0.053	0.050	0.269
Anxiety -> Self-expressiveness	-0.124	-0.124	0.048	0.010*
Anxiety -> Hedonic	-0.326	-0.322	0.047	0.000*
Anxiety -> Creative Achievement	-0.109	-0.107	0.047	0.022*
Anxiety -> Social Value	0.017	0.017	0.050	0.740
Design Skill -> Utilitarian	0.238	0.242	0.055	0.000*
Design Skill -> Uniqueness	0.091	0.096	0.055	0.096
Design Skill -> Self-expressiveness	0.260	0.263	0.051	0.000*
Design Skill -> Hedonic	0.245	0.249	0.046	0.000*
Design Skill -> Creative Achievement	0.207	0.211	0.049	0.000*
Design Skill -> Social Value	0.266	0.269	0.050	0.000*
Utilitarian -> Purchase Intention	0.326	0.328	0.049	0.000*
Uniqueness -> Purchase Intention	0.080	0.078	0.040	0.047*
Self-expressiveness -> Purchase Intention	0.118	0.118	0.058	0.042*
Hedonic -> Purchase Intention	0.274	0.275	0.054	0.000*
Creative Achievement -> Purchase Intention	0.031	0.028	0.057	0.585
Social Value -> Purchase Intention	0.096	0.098	0.048	0.044*

5.3.5 Hypotheses testing

We will first report the results of the direct effects of the independent variables on the dependant variables in the model. The results of the indirect effects will then be presented. We will use .05 as the criterion for significance when accepting or rejecting the null hypothesis. This is to control the family wise error rate. All the hypotheses for the direct effects and indirect effects are one tail directional hypotheses.

As discussed earlier in section 4.8, (Data Analysis Method), given the complexity of the structure of the conceptual framework, and since prediction if the main goal of the analysis, partial least squares structural modelling (PLS-SEM) was the analytical technique employed in this thesis, using SmartPLS statistical software.

Effect of perceived complexity on the on the anxiety perceived during the gift customisation process

H₁: The perceived complexity of customisation will increase the anxiety felt during the customisation process

Results show a highly significant path between perceived complexity and anxiety ($p = 0.000$). In line with the past literature on customisation, consumers considering the customisation of the bag as a complex task will perceive some anxiety during the customisation task. In other words, perceived complexity increases the level of anxiety perceived during the experience of gift customisation. Therefore, **H₁ is supported by the results of the analysis.**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety	0.633	0.633	0.047	0.000*

Effect of self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety during gift customisation

H₂: Self-perceived design skill will decrease the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process.

The table below reveals a highly significant individual path, with a *p*-value of 0.027, between design skill and the anxiety constructs. This hypothesis H₂ that design skill has a differential impact on perceived anxiety during the gift customisation task is supported by the results of the bootstrapping procedure.

Therefore, self-perceived design skill will have a negative impact on the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process. **H₂ is supported.**

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Design Skill -> Anxiety	-0.114	-0.117	0.052	0.027*

Effect of anxiety on the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation

H₃: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived value of gift customisation.

H₃ₐ: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation.

H₃ᵦ: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.

H3c: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation.

H3d: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.

H3e: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

H3f: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived social value of gift customisation.

As per the table below, the results of the bootstrapping procedure reveal significant individual paths between the anxiety construct and 4 out 6 value dimensions. Only the *p*-values between anxiety and social value ($p = 0.740$) and between anxiety and uniqueness value ($p = 0.269$) are higher than the significant threshold value of .05. This analysis confirms the hypothesis that anxiety has a significant impact on the value perceived during the customisation experience. This seems to be the case for four out of six value dimensions provided by customisation (Utilitarian, Self-Expressiveness, Hedonic and Creative Achievement) but not on uniqueness and social value.

Therefore **H3a, H3c, H3d, H3e are supported by the results of the analysis.** However, anxiety will have an insignificant impact on uniqueness value ($p= .269$) and social value ($p=.740$) during gift customisation displaying non-significant p values.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Anxiety -> Utilitarian	-0.158	-0.155	0.053	0.003*
Anxiety -> Uniqueness	-0.055	-0.053	0.050	0.269
Anxiety -> Self-expressiveness	-0.124	-0.124	0.048	0.010*
Anxiety -> Hedonic	-0.326	-0.322	0.047	0.000*
Anxiety -> Creative Achievement	-0.109	-0.107	0.047	0.022*
Anxiety -> Social Value	0.017	0.017	0.050	0.740

<u>Effect of self-perceived design skill on the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation</u>

H₄: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived value of gift customisation.

H₄ₐ: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation.

H₄ᵦ: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.

H₄c: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation.

H₄d: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.

H₄ₑ: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

H₄f: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived social value of gift customisation.

As per the table below, the results of the bootstrapping procedure reveal highly significant individual paths, with *p*-values of 0.000, between the anxiety construct and five of the six value dimensions. Only the *p*-value between design skill and uniqueness is higher than the threshold value of .05 with (*p* =.096). Consequently, **hypotheses 4 (a, c, d, e, f) that high/low self-perceived design skill will have a differential impact on the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation are supported by the PLS-SEM results.**

However, self-perceived design skill will have an insignificant impact on uniqueness value during gift customisation (p = 0.096). It is not significant at the set threshold of .05 (but it would be significant at the less stringent threshold of p = 0.1).

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Design Skill -> Utilitarian	0.238	0.242	0.055	0.000*
Design Skill -> Uniqueness	0.091	0.096	0.055	0.096
Design Skill -> Self-expressiveness	0.260	0.263	0.051	0.000*
Design Skill -> Hedonic	0.245	0.249	0.046	0.000*
Design Skill -> Creative Achievement	0.207	0.211	0.049	0.000*
Design Skill -> Social Value	0.266	0.269	0.050	0.000*

Effect of the six perceived value dimensions on purchase intention of the customised gift

H5: The perceived value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5a: The perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5b: The perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5c: The perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5d: The perceived hedonic value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5e: The perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H5f: The perceived social value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

Almost all structural paths between value dimensions and purchase intention show significant p-values, except the path between creative achievement value and purchase intention which reveals a p-value of 0.585. The findings suggest that, in gift giving customisation, perceived creative achievement value does not impact positively the purchase intention. Based on Merle *et al.* (2010), hedonic and creative achievement relate to the customisation experience rather than the customised product itself, contrary to the other value dimensions. Therefore, the perception of creative achievement value may be perceived by the customer during the experience but does not necessarily lead to a wish to purchase the customised product. This could explain the lack of significance in the structural path between creative achievement and purchase intention.

To sum up, hypotheses 5 (a, b, c, d, f) are supported by the analyses. On the other hand, H5e is not supported by the results.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	P Values
Utilitarian -> Purchase Intention	0.326	0.328	0.049	0.000*
Uniqueness -> Purchase Intention	0.080	0.078	0.040	0.047*
Self-expressiveness -> Purchase Intention	0.118	0.118	0.058	0.042*
Hedonic -> Purchase Intention	0.274	0.275	0.054	0.000*
Creative Achievement -> Purchase Intention	0.031	0.028	0.057	0.585
Social Value -> Purchase Intention	0.096	0.098	0.048	0.044*

Effect of the nature of the recipient on the hypothesised relationships

H₆: The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H₁ to H₅f

The results of the multi-group analysis (Self- Gift Giving groups vs. Gift-Giving groups) show that there is no significant impact of the nature of the recipient on the relationships of the conceptual framework. The structural paths display non-significant *p* values. Only one path is significant between design skill and uniqueness value (*p*=0.030). This means that the respondents' positive and negative feelings during the customisation experience did not differ significantly whether they were customising a bag as a gift for themselves or for their best friend. **H₆ is therefore not supported** by the results of the analysis.

Table 22. Summary of Significance of Structural Paths Results

	Path Coefficients-diff (SGGROUP(1.0) - GGGROUP(2.0))	p-Value original 1-tailed (SGGROUP(1.0) vs GGGROUP(2.0))	p-Value new (SGGROUP(1.0) vs GGGROUP(2.0))
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety	-0.014	0.565	0.870
Anxiety -> Creative Achievement	-0.087	0.814	0.372
Anxiety -> Hedonic	-0.085	0.809	0.381
Anxiety -> Self-expressiveness	-0.051	0.702	0.596
Anxiety -> Social Value	-0.175	0.951	0.099
Anxiety -> Uniqueness	-0.191	0.969	0.063
Anxiety -> Utilitarian	0.057	0.295	0.590
Design Skill -> Anxiety	0.045	0.325	0.651
Design Skill -> Creative Achievement	-0.077	0.777	0.446
Design Skill -> Hedonic	-0.144	0.942	0.115
Design Skill -> Self-expressiveness	0.151	0.063	0.126
Design Skill -> Social Value	0.082	0.202	0.404
Design Skill -> Uniqueness	-0.232	0.985	0.030*
Design Skill -> Utilitarian	-0.126	0.875	0.251
Hedonic -> Purchase Intention	0.034	0.374	0.748
Self-expressiveness -> Purchase Intention	0.126	0.133	0.266
Creative Achievement -> Purchase Intention	-0.087	0.783	0.433
Social Value -> Purchase Intention	-0.026	0.607	0.785
Uniqueness -> Purchase Intention	-0.159	0.969	0.061
Utilitarian -> Purchase Intention	0.095	0.174	0.349

5.3.6 Mediation Effects Testing

<u>The mediating effect of perceived anxiety on the relationship between perceived complexity and the value dimensions</u>

Using the bootstrapping method on SmartPLS, the mediating effect of perceived anxiety was calculated. Results show that perceived anxiety does have a significant mediating effect on the relationships between perceived complexity and four out six value dimensions, i.e., on creative achievement, hedonic, self-expressiveness, utilitarian value. However, it does not have any significant impact on the paths between perceived complexity and social value (p=0.751) and between perceived complexity and uniqueness value (p=0.274).

Mediating Effect of Anxiety	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Creative Achievement	-0.069	-0.067	0.032	2.175	0.030*
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Hedonic	-0.207	-0.207	0.035	5.859	0.000*
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Self-expressiveness	-0.078	-0.078	0.032	2.478	0.013*
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Social Value	0.011	0.011	0.033	0.317	0.751
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Uniqueness	-0.035	-0.035	0.032	1.095	0.274
Perceived complexity -> Anxiety -> Utilitarian	-0.100	-0.100	0.036	2.813	0.005*

These results are in line with the analysis of the direct effect of anxiety on the value dimensions reported above. The direct individual paths also revealed significant values between anxiety and the same four dimensions (utilitarian, self-expressiveness, hedonic and creative achievement value). Similarly, uniqueness and social value were not directly impacted by anxiety. Therefore, anxiety has a direct and a mediating effect on four out of six value dimensions. In sum, anxiety directly and indirectly through perceived complexity, decreases most of the value dimensions conferred by the customisation experience.

<u>The mediating effect of value dimensions on the relationship between anxiety and purchase intention and between self-perceived design skill and purchase intention</u>

The potential mediating effect of the six value dimensions was measured using the bootstrapping method on SmartPLS. The results of the analysis show that only utilitarian and hedonic value have a significant mediating effect on both relationships, between anxiety and purchase intention and between self-perceived design skill and purchase intention. The other value dimensions do not have any significant mediating effect on purchase intention although, self-expressiveness displays a p-value close to significance, (p=0.065).

In sum, whilst five out six value dimensions (i.e., except creative achievement) have a significant direct impact on purchase intention, they have a limited mediating impact on the other relationships of the model. Only utilitarian and hedonic value significantly decrease the negative impact of anxiety on purchase intention and significantly increase the positive effect of self-perceived design skill on purchase intention of the customised gift.

Mediating Effect of Value Dimensions	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (|O/STDEV|)	P Values
Anxiety -> Utilitarian -> Purchase Intention	-0.052	-0.052	0.018	2.791	0.005*
Anxiety -> Hedonic -> Purchase Intention	-0.089	-0.089	0.022	4.108	0.000*
Anxiety -> Self-expressiveness -> Purchase Intention	-0.015	-0.015	0.010	1.534	0.125
Anxiety -> Uniqueness -> Purchase Intention	-0.004	-0.004	0.005	0.892	0.373
Anxiety -> Creative Achievement -> Purchase Intention	-0.003	-0.004	0.007	0.471	0.637
Anxiety -> Social Value -> Purchase Intention	0.002	0.002	0.006	0.282	0.778
Design Skill -> Utilitarian -> Purchase Intention	0.078	0.078	0.022	3.597	0.000*
Design Skill -> Hedonic -> Purchase Intention	0.067	0.068	0.019	3.600	0.000*
Design Skill -> Uniqueness -> Purchase Intention	0.007	0.008	0.006	1.168	0.243
Design Skill -> Self-expressiveness -> Purchase Intention	0.031	0.031	0.017	1.848	0.065
Design Skill -> Creative Achievement -> Purchase Intention	0.006	0.007	0.012	0.526	0.599
Design Skill -> Social Value -> Purchase Intention	0.026	0.026	0.014	1.802	0.072

The results of the main study displayed positive results confirming the validity of the model and supporting most of the hypotheses put forward. These findings will be detailed and discussed in the next chapter. Contributions to theory in the fields of consumer value, customisation and gift giving and to managerial practice will be presented. Finally, directions for future research will be suggested.

CHAPTER 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATION FOR THEORY AND PRACTICE, FURTHER RESEARCH

Upon completion of the data analysis, research findings are discussed, and conclusions are drawn. As part of the discussion of results, the research hypotheses are confirmed or rejected and findings from the research are compared to extant knowledge in the field. Conclusions on whether empirical findings contradict or confirm prior theoretical knowledge are drawn. Based on the discussion and conclusions, the contributions of the research to theory and practice are established.

Both theoretical contributions and managerial implications are salient when conducting business research, where the purpose is to find novel ways of addressing business problems. Finally, the limitations of the research are presented, along with directions for future research.

6.1 Discussion of Findings

6.1.1 Summary of research objectives

The overall aim of this research was to investigate the effects of the positive and negative aspects of customisation on perceived value in the contexts of both self-gifting and interpersonal gifting and the resulting intention to purchase the customised product.

Negative feelings such as perceived complexity resulting from the multiple choices offered to the consumer have been identified in past studies in the field of customisation (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). The perceived complexity of customisation can even lead to feelings of anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009). The gifting literature also demonstrated that gift giving situations are complex and can also trigger anxiety (Wooten, 2000; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts, 2007). However, there is no extant research on the effect of perceived complexity on the anxiety perceived during gift customisation, Therefore, **the first objective** of this research was to investigate the relative impact of perceived complexity on anxiety during the gift customisation experience.

Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) findings suggested that design support, together with self-perceived design skill, decreased anxiety and raised product expectations when participants were designing products as gifts but not for themselves. Therefore, high design skill self-confidence lowers the anxiety perceived when customising an interpersonal gift, when design support is available. The present thesis will complement Moreau, Bonney and

Herd's (2011) research by (i) investigating the impact of self-perceived design kill on anxiety in the absence of design support, and (ii) on the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation and (iii) indirectly on purchase intention of the customised gift. To the author's best knowledge, no prior study has examined the impact of self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety during gift customisation for oneself or for others, when "design support" is unavailable. The analysis of self-perceived design skill on its own and see how it affects anxiety without the presence of design support in the context of gift customisation (self vs other) is interesting and complements Moreau, Bonney and Herd's (2011) research. Hence the **second objective** of this research was to investigate the impact of perceived design skill on the anxiety perceived during the gift customisation experience.

The literature demonstrated that both customisation and gifting situations can generate anxiety. A few studies have examined the impact of anxiety on other constructs. In the gifting literature, Ward and Broniarczyk (2013) and Givi and Galak (2017) examined how the fear to get the wrong gift influences purchase intention. Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) studied the effect of anxiety on product expectation and product satisfaction. This thesis argues that anxiety can have a negative impact on the perceived value conferred by gift customisation. However, this effect of anxiety on the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation seems to have never been studied. Therefore, the **third objective** of this thesis was to investigate whether anxiety has negative impact on the perceived value conferred by gift customisation.

Whilst this thesis proposed that anxiety impacts the value perceived during the customisation experience, past literature posited that one of the keys to a positive customisation leading to a purchase is good self-perceived design skill (Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) also demonstrated that high confidence in designing a gift, especially in the context of inter-personal gifting decreased anxiety and raised product expectations. Nevertheless, there is apparently no prior research attesting the direct impact of self-perceived design skill onto the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation. Hence **the fourth objective** of this research was to investigate the positive impact of self-perceived design skills on the six dimensions of consumer's perceived value bestowed by the customisation experience, in the context of gifting**.**

Another relationship that merited attention was between the value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation and the purchase intention. Many studies on the perceived value of the customised product view it as an antecedent to the purchase intention (Zeithaml, 1988; Bolton and Drew, 1991). Merle *et al*.'s (2008) findings showed that the overall perceived value of the customised product (i.e, the combination of value of customised product and the experience)

has a positive influence on the intention of purchasing the mass-customised product. However, to the author's knowledge, there is no extant research on the relationship between the six value dimensions conferred by customisation and purchase intention in the context of gifting. Consequently, this thesis suggested as a **fifth objective** to examine the positive effect of each of the six value dimensions conferred by gift customisation and the purchase intention of the customised gift.

Finally, only few studies, such as Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) and Bonney, Herd, and Moreau (2011) examined the influence of the nature of the recipient on the customisation experience. On the other hand, in the gifting literature, a few studies made a distinction relating to the nature of the recipient. For instance, Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts (2007) highlighted the therapeutic value of self-gifts as a means of feeling better and identified gift giving as a source of enjoyment resulting from finding the perfect gift. However, Ward and Broniarczyk (2013) stated that *'the choice of the right gift is more complex than choosing something for oneself'* (p. S271). Therefore, both streams of literature, customisation and gifting, imply that the nature of the recipient of the gift (self vs. others) does have an impact on other constructs. Hence, the **sixth objective** of the research was to examine the indirect effect of the nature of the recipient (self vs. others) on all the hypothesised relationships of the conceptual framework.

6.1.2 Discussion of research findings

In this section, the research findings are discussed in the context of extant research. The research hypotheses and related empirical findings are summarised in Table 23 and Figure 6 below:

Table 23. Summary of Research Findings

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES	FINDINGS
H₁: The perceived complexity of gift customisation will increase the anxiety felt during the customisation process.	Supported
H₂: Perceived design skill will decrease the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process.	Supported
H₃: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₃ₐ: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation	Supported
H₃ᵦ: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.	NOT Supported
H₃c: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation	Supported
H₃d: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₃e: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₃f: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived social value of gift customisation.	NOT Supported
H₄: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₄ₐ: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₄ᵦ: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.	NOT supported
H₄c: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₄d: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₄e: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₄f: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived social value of gift customisation.	Supported
H₅: The perceived value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₅ₐ: The perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₅ᵦ: The perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₅c: The perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₅d: The perceived hedonic value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₅e: The perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	NOT supported
H₅f: The perceived social value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Supported
H₆: The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H₁ to H₅f	NOT supported

Figure 6. Structural Model Results

H₆: The nature of the recipient (Self vs. Other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H₁ to H₅f

→ Research Hypotheses supported

→ Research Hypotheses NOT supported
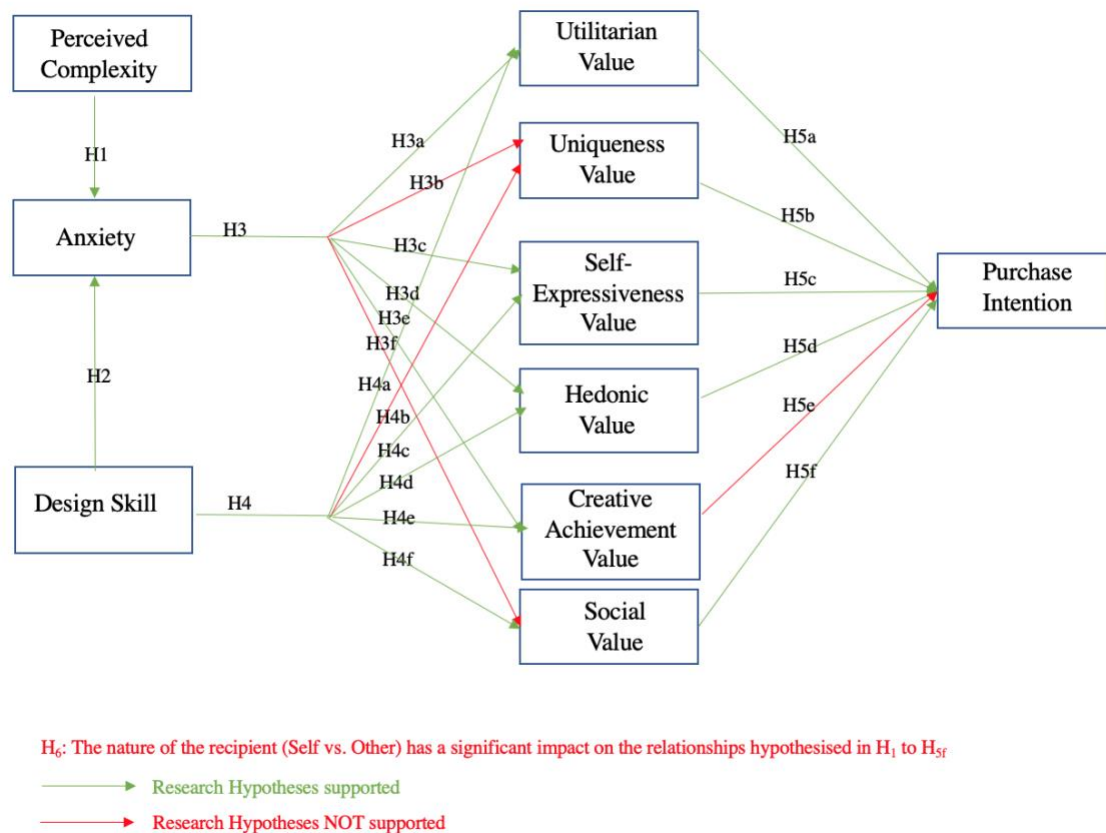
<u>The impact of perceived complexity of gift customisation on anxiety felt during the customisation process.</u>

The first objective of this thesis was to examine if perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation significantly was impacted by perceived complexity, hypothesised as follows:

H₁: The perceived complexity of gift customisation will increase the anxiety felt during the customisation process.

This finding indicates that perceived complexity has a positive impact on the level of anxiety perceived by the consumer, which in turn will impact the value perceived during the gift customisation task. More specifically, the more challenging was the bag customisation task perceived by the consumers, the higher the anxiety they experienced during the task. Notably, the complexity felt by respondents during the customisation task was not dependent upon the number of customisation options (high or low), nor upon the recipient of the gift (self vs. other).

123

This result is consistent with prior literature in the field of customisation, demonstrating that customisation is more demanding than buying a standard product. Customising a product from a set of options can generate choice complexity (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005) and lead to 'mass confusion' (Pine, 1993; Huffman and Kahn, 1998). This choice complexity can therefore create anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009). Furthermore, choosing the 'right' gift can be daunting since the gift giver may not have access to the recipient's preferences, during the customisation process. Even in the context of self-gifting, consumers can be doubtful about their own preferences (Simonson 2005; Valenzuela, Dhar and Zettelmeyer, 2009).

<u>The impact of self-perceived design skill on perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation</u>

Consistent with the second objective of the research, the relationship between self-perceived design skill and perceived anxiety in the context of gift customisation was hypothesised as follows:

H$_2$: Perceived design skill will decrease the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process.

The analysis of the results revealed that the hypothesised relationship is significant, therefore Hypothesis 2 is supported. This finding indicates that the customer's confidence regarding their self-perceived design skills when designing a bag contributes to reducing the anxiety felt during the customisation experience. The self-perceived design skills in choosing between customisation options has a negative impact on anxiety, that is, it lowers the anxiety of making the incorrect choice.

This outcome is consistent with prior research suggesting that high self-perceived design skill is key to a positive customisation experience (Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005). This research builds on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) findings that suggested that design support, together with self-perceived design skill, decreased anxiety and raised product expectations when participants were designing products as gifts but not for themselves. This research extends Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) findings by demonstrating the impact of self-assessed design skill on anxiety during gift customisation regardless of: (i) the presence of design support, (ii) the nature of the recipient (self vs. other), and (iii) the number of options offered by the customisation tool (high vs. low).

Relating to the third objective of this thesis, the relationships between anxiety and each dimension of perceived value conferred by gift customisation were hypothesised as follows:

H3: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived value of gift customisation.

H3a: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation

H3b: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.

H3c: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation

H3d: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.

H3e: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

H3f: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived social value of gift customisation.

The analysis of the results revealed that four out of six hypothesised relationships are significant. Therefore, **Hypothesis 3 (a, c, d, e) are supported but not H3b, and H3f.**

Perceived anxiety was found to have a negative impact on four of the six value dimensions considered in the context of gift customisation (utilitarian, hedonic, creative achievement, and self-expressiveness value). Contrary to expectations, the findings reveal that perceived anxiety does not have any significant impact on uniqueness value (H3b) and social value (H3f).

Regarding the unsupported H3b, Fiore, Lee, and Kunz, (2004) established that the desire to obtain a unique product is one of the motivations behind taking part in a customisation program. Therefore, this outcome could be explained by the fact that even if the customers feel anxious when designing a bag, the uniqueness value will be intact since the bag will feel as a unique piece compared to a bag 'picked on the shelf' in a shop. Franke and Schreier (2008) identified a positive impact of the perceived uniqueness of a mass-customised product on the utility consumers derive from mass customisation. Despite the anxiety they may perceived, consumers will have taken the time to create a special bag by choosing among several options of shape, colour etc, especially in the groups using the high complexity tool. Therefore, the uniqueness value is not significantly impacted by perceived anxiety.

It is the same outcome for social value. H3f was not supported by the results. Areni, Kiecker, and Palan (1988) refer to the 'sacrifice', meaning the investment of thought and effort a giver makes in creating or refining a special object. Prior research has shown that the greater the behavioral costs to select or produce the gift, the more recipients value the gift (Robben and Verhallen, 1994). Personally made presents involving "psychic costs" of the giver are more

appreciated by recipients than pre-wrapped gifts "picked" on a shelf of a store (Larsen and Watson, 2001). This finding can be justified by the fact that by making the effort to customise a bag instead of purchasing a standard bag, customers will still benefit from social approval, irrespective of the anxiety felt during the process. The customisation effort will be recognised, either by themselves as a personal achievement or by the recipient as a special gift, regardless of the customised design of the bag is considered successful or not.

Overall, the above evidence confirms predictions and by doing so, extends knowledge by demonstrating that anxiety is not only present during gift customisation, but it also has a significant and negative impact on most value dimensions and thus, affects the enjoyment of customising a gift.

The impact of self-perceived design skill on the consumer's perceived six value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation

When addressing the fourth objective, the relationship between self-perceived design skill and the six dimensions of perceived value conferred by gift customisation were hypothesised as follows:

H$_4$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived value of gift customisation.

H$_{4a}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation.

H$_{4b}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation.

H$_{4c}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation.

H$_{4d}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived hedonic value of gift customisation.

H$_{4e}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation.

H$_{4f}$: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived social value of gift customisation.

The analysis of the findings revealed that five out of six hypothesised relationships between perceived design skill and value dimensions are significant. With the exception of uniqueness value, self-perceived design skill has a significant and positive effect on five value dimensions. Consequently, **Hypothesis 4 (a, c, d e, f) are supported but not H$_{4b}$.**

Self-perceived design skill has an impact on most of the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation. This finding is consistent with past research revealing that self-confidence in the consumer's design skill is salient to ensure a positive customisation experience (Dellaert

and Stremersch, 2005; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011). However, prior literature had only observed that self-perceived design skill can decrease anxiety in certain circumstances, such as gift giving and in the presence of design support (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011).

Contrary to expectations, H_{4b} was not supported by the results of the analysis. This means that there is no significant relationship between perceived design skill and uniqueness value. According to the literature, the customised product enables consumers to show their individuality by displaying 'uniqueness attributes' (Fiore, Lee, and Kunz 2004). Uniqueness value relates to the desire to obtain a unique product (Schreier 2006); whether respondents believe in their design skill or not during the customisation task, they will still consider that the bag they have customised is unique. Hence, regardless of their confidence in designing a bag, the uniqueness value will be intact since the bag will still feel as a unique piece compared to a standard bag purchased in a shop. By definition, customising a gift means having taken the time to create a unique product by choosing among several options. Therefore, uniqueness value is not impacted by self- perceived design skill.

<u>The effect of each of the six customisation value dimensions on the purchase intention of the customised gift.</u>

The relationships between the six dimensions of perceived value conferred by gift customisation and purchase intention, identified as the 5th objective of this thesis, were hypothesised as follows:

H_5: **The perceived value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.**

H_{5a}: The perceived utilitarian value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H_{5b}: The perceived uniqueness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H_{5c}: The perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H_{5d}: The perceived hedonic value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H_{5e}: The perceived creative achievement value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

H_{5f}: The perceived social value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.

The results of the analysis show that five out of six value dimensions have a significant positive impact on purchase intention. Specifically, **hypotheses 5 (a, b, c, d, f)** are supported. However, hypothesis 5_e is not supported. Hence, the findings of this study reveal that, except for creative achievement value, all other value dimensions increase purchase intention.

These results are in line with past literature in the field of customisation. The benefits of the customisation experience are the value dimensions identified by Merle *et al.* (2010) and the additional social value identified in the literature. Perceived value from customisation leads to "a willingness to pay premium" (Franke and Piller, 2004), 'a willingness to pay' (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011) or 'an intention to purchase the customised product' (Merle, Chandon, and Roux, 2008; Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009). A positive customisation experience is indeed key to increase the chance of purchase. However, yet no author had examined the direct impact of the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation on purchase intention.

However, surprisingly, the results of the analysis show that creative achievement value does not have a significant impact on purchase intention. Hypothesis 5_e is not supported by the analysis of the results.

This outcome could be explained by the fact that according to the Consumer Perceived Value Tool (CVPT) developed by Merle *et al.* (2010), creative achievement value and hedonic value are the two benefits provided by the customisation experience rather than the customised product. Creative Achievement is the *'value acquired from the feeling of accomplishment related to the creative task of co-designing'* (Merle *et al.,* p.506). Therefore, it could be that consumers perceive creative achievement value thanks to the creative experience of customising a bag, the '*pride of authorship'* (Schreier, 2006), regardless of their intention to purchase the bag. When consumers act as designers, '*they may experience strong feelings of pride, which in turn could increase the value created'* (Schreier 2006, p.323). Hence, the irrepressible presence of pride and feeling of accomplishment given by the customisation experience would explain the absence of the significant impact of creative achievement value on purchase intention.

The indirect effect of the nature of the recipient on the hypothesised relationships of the model

Our final objective was to investigate the impact of the nature of the recipient on all the hypothesised relationships. This was hypothesised as follows:

H$_6$: The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H$_1$ to H$_{5f}$

Contrary to predictions, the analysis of the results revealed that the hypothesised relationships of the proposed model are not significantly impacted by the nature of the recipient, self vs other. Therefore, **hypothesis 6 is not supported.**

This finding is surprising since the customisation and gifting streams of literature suggested that customising for oneself vs. other and gifting oneself vs. other was different and therefore had implications on the benefits and challenges associated with the gift customisation process. For instance, in the customisation literature, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) argued that customising for oneself triggered perceived complexity that led to anxiety: *'for many consumers, customizing products for oneself can result in frustration or anxiety (Valenzuela, Dhar, and Zettelmeyer, 2009)'*, (Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011, p.121). Moreover, in the context of customising a gift for a recipient, Gift-Giving Anxiety (Wooten, 2000) and Social Anxiety (Schlenker and Leary, 1982) were compounded the anxiety to customise. Therefore, the expectation was that the negative feelings bestowed by gift customisation would be enhanced in the context of gift customisation for a recipient. However, according to our results, this is not the case.

These results could find an explanation in other studies in the gifting literature. Robben and Verhallen (1994) have shown that the greater the behavioral costs of selecting or producing the gift, the more recipients value the gift. This finding was later confirmed by Larsen and Watson (2001), stating that personally made presents involving 'psychic costs' of the giver are more appreciated by recipients than pre-wrapped gifts 'picked' on a shelf of a store. These findings are particularly relevant to the gift customisation context. Indeed, by making the effort of creating a gift for a special person rather than purchasing a standard present in a shop, the consumer seeks social approval and expects a higher satisfaction from the receiver. Consequently, it would mean that the consumer seeks social approval of the recipient rather than a successful customised bag. Equally, consumers do not feel more complexity or anxiety when customising for recipient than for themselves since they assume that the recipient will value their effort to customise a bag rather than buying a ready-made one, regardless of whether the actual design of the bag is liked by the recipient or not.

Finally, the mediating effects of anxiety and of the value dimensions on the relationships of the model were also tested. The results revealed that anxiety has a significant mediating effect on the relationship between perceived complexity and four out of six value dimensions. However, anxiety does not have a significant mediating effect on the relationship between complexity and social value and between complexity and uniqueness value. These findings are consistent with the results of hypothesis 3 testing regarding the direct effect of anxiety on the value dimensions. As for the mediating impact of the value dimensions on the relationship between anxiety and purchase intention and between self-perceived design skill and purchase

intention, the analysis shows that only utilitarian and hedonic value have a significant mediating effect on both relationships.

6.2 THESIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THEORY

6.2.1 Contributions to Theory

There is a consensus amongst scholars that consumer perceived-value is an essential aspect of the success of mass-customisation (Fiore *et al.,* 2004; Franke and Schreier, 2006; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Trentin, Perrin, and Forza, 2014; Moreau *et al.,* 2020). Increasing the benefits gained from a mass- customisation experience is key to augmenting the consumer's willingness to pay (Trentin, Perrin, and Forza, 2014). Conversely, past literature showed that the complexity of self-designing a product and the effort involved may increase the likelihood of abandoning the customisation process without actually buying the product (Huffman and Kahn, 1998; Dellaert and Stemersch, 2005).

Similarly, in the gifting literature, value is also recognised as a key element of the gifting experience (Larsen and Watson, 2001). Both interpersonal gift-giving and self-gift giving reflect a hedonic form of consumption. However, just like customisation, gifting also brings ambivalent feelings, *'Gifts have been responsible for stress, anxiety, and disappointment, yet they have also led to excitement, satisfaction, and extreme pleasure'* (Larsen and Watson, 2001, p. 889). Therefore, both customisation and gifting arouse ambivalent feelings. However, the trade-offs between the positive experiential benefits and the 'costs' of gift customisation are not well understood.

A thorough investigation of both positive (i.e., perceived value, self- perceived design skill, purchase intention) and negative (i.e., perceived complexity, anxiety) feelings emanating from the gift customisation process is a gap in the literature. As such, this thesis brings together two streams of literature: customisation and gifting in an effort to enhance understanding of customer psychology and behaviour in the context of gift customisation.

In so doing, this research contributes to extant theories in the domain of consumer value, customisation and gifting and more broadly, in the field of consumer behaviour. More specifically, by increasing our understanding of the dimensions of consumer value in the context of gift customisation, the Theory of Consumption Value (Sheth 1991), relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour is considered as the overarching theory of this thesis as discussed below.

Extension of application of Theory of Consumption Value (Sheth 1991)

Marketing practice and literature emphasise the role played by consumer value in the context of both customisation (Peppers and Rogers, 1997; Fiore, Lee, and Kunz, 2004; Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005; Franke and Schreier, 2006; Schreier, 2006; Franke *et al.,* 2010; Merle *et al.,* 2010; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Trentin, Perrin, and Forza, 2014; Yoo and Park 2016; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Moreau *et al.,* 2020) and gifting (Caplow, 1984; Camerer, 1988; Fischer and Arnold, 1990; Babin, Darden, and Griffin*,* 1994, Larsen and Watson, 2001; Babin, Gonzalez, and Watts*,* 2007; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011; Givi and Galak, 2017; Moreau *et al.,* 2020).

This thesis investigates, for the first time, the value dimensions in the context of gift customisation for the self and in the case of interpersonal gifting. Moreover, this research examines the impact self-perceived design skill on the value dimensions and the relationship between value dimensions and purchase intention of the customised product.

By increasing our understanding of the dimensions of consumer value in the context of gift customisation, the present study contributes to Sheth's (1991) 'Theory of Consumption Values' relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour. According to Sheth (1991), products have been known to possess symbolic or conspicuous consumption value in addition to their functional utility.   The application of Sheth's theory aiming at a better understanding of 'why we buy what we buy' through a Theory of Consumption Values has been extended to the context of gift customisation.

Firstly, the findings of this study have shown, for the first time, that self-perceived design skill has a positive effect on all value dimensions conferred by gift customisation, except for uniqueness value (Hypothesis 4). These results are consistent with past research revealing that self-confidence in the consumer's design skill is salient to ensure a positive customisation experience (Dellaert and Stremersch, 2005, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011). Self-perceived design skill can both decrease anxiety in certain conditions according to Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011) but can also, according to the new findings of this thesis, increase value in the context of gift customisation, regardless of the recipient (self or other) and of the task complexity (high or low number of options available). The fact that there is no significant impact of perceived design skill on uniqueness value is because whether the consumers believe in their design skill or not during the customisation task, they always consider that the bag they have customised as unique compared to a 'ready-made' bag purchased on the shelf of a shop.

Secondly, this thesis demonstrated that all value dimensions identified by Merle *et al.* (2010), hedonic, utilitarian, uniqueness, self-expressiveness, except creative achievement, and the additional social value identified by this thesis from the literature, have a significant impact on purchase intention in the context of gift customisation (Hypothesis 5). Consumers perceive creative achievement value due to the experience of customising a bag, regardless of their intention to purchase the bag. Hence, this explains the absence of the significant impact of creative achievement value on purchase intention.

Therefore, a positive gift customisation experience is indeed key to increasing the chance of purchase. This study is the first to examine the direct impact of the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation on purchase intention.

In sum, these findings advance knowledge regarding the reasons why we purchase, or not, a product based on the subjective values influencing the consumer choice and thus, contribute to the 'Theory of Consumption Values' and extend its application to the field of gift customisation.

Extension of application of Benefit Theory (Vershofen 1959)

Marketing scholars have highlighted the complexity of the value construct (Holbrook 1982, 1994, 1999; Gallarza 2011, 2015, 2017). Most research on consumer value focus on the trade-off between quality and price (Gallarza, 2011). However, based on Verhofen's (1959) Benefit Theory, other constructs such as benefits which consider the cognitive and affective nature of value need to be considered. 'Benefit Theory' explains that products carry not only functional benefits but also social and psychological benefits. The additional benefits relate to a broader and more flexible view of value, by including the social and psychological benefits offered by a product.

In a departure from the above idea, this thesis investigates for the first time the value dimensions in line with Vershofen's Benefit Theory (1959), in the context of gift customisation. Based on the classification of the benefits identified by Merle *et al.* (2010) and the literature review, the findings of this thesis demonstrate that gift customisation offers not only functional benefits (utilitarian value, uniqueness and self-expressiveness) but also social and psychological benefits (hedonic value, creative achievement value and social value) to the consumers.

By adding to our understanding of the dimensions of consumer benefits in the context of gift customisation, the findings of the present study contribute to the body of literature on

consumer value. More specifically, this thesis advances knowledge about the negative, i.e., complexity (H_2), anxiety (H_3), and positive, i.e., self-perceived design skill (H_4) constructs that can impact the functional, but also social and psychological benefits of customising a gift. Thus, this research extends the application of 'Benefit Theory' (Vershofen, 1959) to the context of gift customisation, both self-gifting and inter-personal gifting.

Extension of application Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy 1982)

One of the key value dimensions of customisation, identified by Merle *et al.* (2010), is self-expressiveness value. This value originates from Self-Concept Theory (Sirgy, 1982). This theory relates to the benefit of owning a product that reflects one's own image. Customisation provides an opportunity for consumers to possess products that express their personalities since they can choose from among several options.

Self-Concept Theory was only examined in the context of customisation for oneself, i.e., to own a product corresponding to the own image of the consumer. This thesis examines for the first time Self-Concept Theory in both contexts, customisation for oneself and customisation for a recipient and also in the specific scenario of gifting.

In the scenario of interpersonal gifting, by customising the bag online instead of buying a 'ready-made bag', the consumer decides to create a gift for a recipient, her best friend, without having direct access to her preferences. Therefore, by designing a gift, the consumer expresses her personality and tastes when choosing among a set of customisation options.

The findings of this study show that self-expressiveness was perceived in both contexts and that it has a positive impact on the purchase intention of the customised bag (Hypothesis 5c). Consequently, the application of Self-Concept Theory is extended to the interpersonal gifting situation which implies that consumers not only enjoy owning but also giving customised gifts to close recipient, that reflect their own image.

Extension of application of Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954)

Decision-making and customisation are highly linked. Indeed, depending on the number of attributes to choose from, customising implies a limited or a wide range of decisions to take to design a product. Similarly, decision- making is also at the heart of gifting situations, whether self-gifting or interpersonal gifting. Depending on the gifting situation, stakes can be high when choosing a gift.

Given the above discussion, the Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954) seems to be very relevant to the context of customisation and gifting. It focuses on the importance of subjective values and beliefs in judgments and decision-making. Past literature has only associated the Behavioural Decision Theory with self-customisation (Simonson, 2005; Valenzuela, Dhar and Zettelmeyer, 2009), not with gift customisation.

The findings of this thesis demonstrate how the value conferred by customisation in both contexts, self-gifting and interpersonal gifting, impact positively the purchase intention of the customised gift, and by doing so contributes to the 'Theory of Behavioural Decision'.

Five out of six value dimensions positively affect the decision of purchasing the customised bag whether the bag is intended a gift for the consumer or for a recipient (Hypothesis 5). The only non-significant relationship is between creative achievement and purchase intention. Consumers perceive creative achievement value thanks to the creative experience of customising a bag, regardless of their intention to purchase the bag. Hence, this would explain the absence of the significant impact of creative achievement value on purchase intention.

By investigating the complexity of the psychology behind the consumer's decision process during the gift customisation experience and confirming that subjective values impact decisions, this thesis contributes to the 'Behavioural Decision Theory' and extends its application to the context of gift customisation.

Extension of application of Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory (Sherry, McGrath, and Levy, 1993), (Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959), and Social Anxiety Theory (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)

Following the literature review, whilst customisation and gifting provide value to the consumer, they can also trigger anxiety. Gift giving anxiety come from the gifting literature (Wooten, 2000) and social anxiety comes from the impression management theory (Goffman 1959; Schlenker and Leary, 1982).

All three theories apply in the context of gift customisation. They relate to the fear of disappointment of the recipient when choosing a gift or the stress of 'designing' the wrong gift in the context of customisation as presented by Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011). Customising a gift is more challenging than purchasing a standard product in self-gifting or gift-giving situations.

The results of Hypothesis 1 illustrate this matter when displaying a highly significant impact of perceived complexity on perceived anxiety. Perceived complexity has a significant impact on the anxiety felt during the customisation experience, regardless of the number of options available in the customisation tool (high vs. low number) and of the recipient of the gift (self or other). This anxiety will in turn affects the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation. Conversely, self-perceived design skill decreases perceived anxiety during gift customisation (Hypothesis 2). In other words, the more confidence in designing a gift, the less anxiety the consumers perceive during the process. Both results advance knowledge about the Gift-Giving Anxiety and Impression Management Theories and extend their application to the domain of gift customisation.

Furthermore, four of five value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation are impacted negatively by perceived anxiety (utilitarian, hedonic, creative achievement, and self-expressiveness value) (Hypothesis 3). Perceived anxiety is one of the negative feelings together with perceived complexity that affects the gift customisation experience. When customising a gift, consumers put pressure on themselves and may experience anxiety since they *'are motivated to make desired impressions but are doubtful of success'* (Wooten, 2000, p.85). This concern to make a good impression on the recipient may lead to stress and even anxiety. Anxiety is increased in the context of customisation since the giver must make even more choices on behalf of the recipient or for himself than when purchasing a standard gift. The lack of familiarity with the recipient's preferences (Wooten, 2000; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011) or doubts regarding one's own preferences (Simonson, 2005; Franke, Keinz, and Steger, 2009; Yoo and Park, 2016) generate anxiety and thus impact the value dimensions generated by the gift customisation experience.

However, perceived anxiety does not have any significant impact on uniqueness value and social value. Regarding perceived uniqueness value, anxiety will have no effect because the bag will still feel more unique than a standard bag bought in a shop. As for social value, the consumers will feel that their initiative to customise a bag will be socially recognised as a special effort even if the design of bag is not considered particularly successful.

The present study builds on Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) work by examining the impact of gift giving anxiety in the context of gift customisation, self vs. other. However, the investigation of the direct negative impact on the value dimensions as well as the mediating effect of anxiety on the relationship between perceived complexity and the value dimensions (except for social value and uniqueness value), allow this thesis to go one step further and as such extends the scope of knowledge of the Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory.

Finally, based on the literature review, hypothesis 6 posited the nature of recipient as a moderator of the relationships linked to gift customisation. Ward and Broniarczyk (2013, p. S271) posit that *'the choice of the right gift is more complex than choosing something for oneself'*. However, findings revealed that contrary to expectations, the nature of the recipient of the gift, self vs. other does not have any significant impact the hypothesised relationships. These results also contribute to 'Gift Giving Anxiety Theory' by stating that consumers do not feel more anxiety when customising for themselves or others.

In sum, the results of analysis of hypotheses 1, 2, 3, 6 and the analysis of the mediating effect of anxiety, all contribute to the Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory and indirectly to the founding theories of Impression Management (Goffman, 1959) and Social Anxiety (Schlenker and Leary, 1982). More generally, these key findings contribute to the following streams of literature: consumer value, customisation, gifting and anxiety. Indeed, this thesis advances knowledge on the consumer psychology during customisation and on the antecedents that trigger anxiety in the specific context of gift customisation.

Table 24. Summary of Contributions to Theory

Hypotheses	Contributions to Theory
H₁: The perceived complexity of customisation will increase the anxiety felt during the customisation process.	Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory (Sherry et al., 1993), (Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959), and Social Anxiety Theory (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)
H₂: Self-perceived design skill will decrease the anxiety felt during the gift customisation process.	
H₃: Perceived anxiety will decrease the perceived value of gift customisation.	
H₄: Self-perceived design skill will increase the perceived value of gift customisation.	Theory of Consumption Value (Sheth 1991)
H₅: The perceived value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Theory of Consumption Value (Sheth 1991) Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954)
H₅c: The perceived self-expressiveness value of gift customisation will increase purchase intention.	Self-Concept Theory ((Sirgy 1982)
H₆: The nature of the recipient (self vs. other) has a significant impact on the relationships hypothesised in H₁ to H₅f	Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory (Sherry et al., 1993), (Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959), and Social Anxiety Theory (Schlenker and Leary, 1982)
H₃, H₄, H₅ relating to the value dimensions conferred by gift customisation	Benefit Theory (Vershofen 1959)

6.3 IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS PRACTICE

At the start of this research project, product customisation existed but was still quite a marginal marketing concept. Customised products are certainly not new to the market, but they are adding an "extra perk" as more and more companies are including customisable features in their products (Forbes, 2020). Recently, customisation, particularly in the context of gifting, has expanded exponentially within many product categories, worldwide. Some brands have even based their business model on customisation. For instance, the fashion companies Dresshirt and The Mighty Company allow customers to upload custom art or words to be printed on their shirts and jackets. Vitamins, shampoo, chocolates, make up etc can be customised according to the needs of the consumer (Forbes, 2020).

As such, many global brands have also included customisation as part of their product offer. Tesla allows customers to design their cars. Nike By You lets you create the exact shoe the consumer desire. Etsy has become a giant player in the online gifting sector by offering thousands of customisable items on their website (Etsy.com).

However, according to Randall, Terwiesch and Ulrich (2005, p. 71), many companies *'that are at the forefront of the customization movement offer a single standard process for their customization experience'*. Therefore, the overall implication of this thesis for business practice of this thesis is the additional information obtained about the consumer psychology during the customisation experience in order to help managers and web designers to build a successful customisation page that will eventually increase purchase intention.

This new knowledge will help create online customisation programs that optimise the experience of the consumer willing to create a product as a gift for themselves or for a recipient by maximising the value perceived, by encouraging the self-assessed design skill and minimising the negative feelings such as perceived complexity and anxiety.

In other words, the findings of this thesis will increase the positive feelings of the consumer during customisation and most importantly will encourage the purchase of the customised product. Below are a few suggested 'actionable' guidelines for the managers to improve the consumer's customisation experience:

Design the customisation web page according to the level of perceived complexity

The results of this thesis provide empirical evidence that perceived complexity during the customising journey will trigger anxiety which in turn will have a negative impact on the value conferred by the experience. Given these findings, managers could ask the designers of the customisation web page to include a question at the beginning of the customisation task to assess the level of complexity perceived by the consumer. Based on their answer, the configurator could adjust the level of complexity of the customisation page, with more or less options to choose from going forward in task. As such, negative feelings of stress and confusion could be lessened leading to a more enjoyable experience.

Self-Assessment of the consumer's design skill to adjust the task complexity

In line with prior literature, the findings from this research demonstrate that perceived anxiety has a significant negative impact on all value dimensions bestowed by gift customisation. The more anxious they feel about the customisation task, the less they enjoy customising and therefore the less likely they are to purchase the customised bag. Besides, the results of this thesis also highlighted that self-assessed design skill had a direct positive impact on perceived anxiety. In other words, the higher the confidence in their customising skills, the less anxiety they will perceive. In the light of these findings, the implication of these results for managerial practice is that it is advisable for the designers of the customisation webpage to add the following steps when building the customisation tool:

First, at the beginning of the customisation task, the consumer could be asked to grade their perceived design skill. Based on their answer, the task complexity could then be adjusted automatically. Second, for the ones who have the least confidence in their customisation skills, some additional design support could be offered during the task. For the design of a bag, the customisation program could, for instance, automatically generate some visuals of customised bags to inspire the customising consumer. Third, some encouraging messages could pop-up on the screen to boost the consumer's confidence while designing the product such as 'you are doing great!', 'nice design!', 'good job!', 'you are a born designer' as well as a congratulations message once the task has been completed, such as 'well done!', 'You have designed a gorgeous bag'.

Offer a second chance to customise the bag

As discussed in the literature review, gift customisation is riskier than buying a standard product. It implies social pressure on the consumer-designers to create a product that will be considered as a successful creation, whether it is a gift for themselves or for a recipient.

The findings from this study confirmed the significant impact of perceived anxiety on the value dimensions conferred by the gift customisation experience. Consequently, companies may want to find a way to alleviate this anxiety by giving the option to the consumer to have one chance to redesign a bag in case the consumer or the recipient of the customised bag is really not satisfied when receiving the bag at home. As such, the consumer would feel less pressure during the customisation task and this would hopefully increase the positive feelings perceived during the experience, leading to a higher purchase intention. However, the dissatisfaction of the consumer at delivery would need to be thoroughly investigated before allowing to get a second chance to customise.

Preliminary questionnaire to identify preferences

One of the main challenges when customising a bag, whether for oneself or other is the complexity of choice. Past literature showed that it was 'riskier' to customise a gift without having access to the recipient's preferences. But also, that many consumers had sometimes doubts about their own preferences (Simonson, 2005). To help identify the preferences of the consumers, a short questionnaire could be set up as a first step before customising the bag to identify their tastes and preferences. Some preliminary questions could be as follows: 'what is your/your best friend's favourite colour?', 'What shape of bag do you have in your closet?'. This questionnaire would oblige the consumer to reflect on their own preferences or the ones of the recipient of the gift.

3D picture of the consumer wearing the customised product

One option to decrease the complexity of choice and the gift giving anxiety would be to offer the possibility to develop a customisation program that allow the consumer to upload a full-length photo of the recipient of the bag and to apply the visual of the customised product, e.g., the handbag, as if she was wearing it. This would give confidence (or not) that the consumer designing the product, has chosen the adequate colours and features for herself or the recipient.

6.4 THESIS LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This section presents the limitations of the research conducted in this thesis. The thesis' limitations provide a number of directions for future research in the field of gift customisation.

6.4.1 Broadening the research scope

Research Direction 1: *Broader investigation of negative and positive feelings from gift customisation*

This thesis has built on prior research on customisation, focusing on the positive constructs, i.e., value dimensions identified by Merle *et al.* (2010) social value, and purchase intention. As for the negative constructs, i.e., perceived complexity and anxiety, highlighted by Moreau, Bonney, and Herd (2011). However, a limitation of this research is that it did not examine all the constructs associated with gift customisation.

Regarding the positive feelings, whilst Yoo and Park (2016) studied the impact of the value dimensions conferred by customisation, this thesis did not consider 'satisfaction' in the conceptual framework. Future research might extend this thesis by investigating the impact of complexity and anxiety on satisfaction rather than value dimensions. It would be important to assess if perceived complexity and anxiety, also decrease the level of satisfaction they perceived from the customisation experience.

As for the negative feelings, the impact of price sensitivity and delivery time on the value dimensions could be examined in the future to have a more holistic view of the trade-offs of gift customisation, both self-gifting and interpersonal gifting.

Research Direction 2: *Inclusion of design support in the customisation process*

As discussed in the literature review, Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) surprising findings posited that design support is less effective for consumers designing products intended as gifts for a recipient rather than for themselves. The fact that design support was not included in the conceptual framework could be considered as one of the limitations of this thesis.

Hence, further research could contemplate to include the presence of design support in the model to test if there is any impact on the negative feelings (perceived complexity and anxiety) and on the positive feelings (six value dimensions) and ultimately on purchase intention, in

both self-giving and gift-giving. It would be an interesting complementary study to Moreau, Bonney, and Herd's (2011) findings and to the present research.

6.4.2 Enhancing the validity of research findings

To obtain a large data set, the data collection was conducted using an online platform to recruit participants meeting the pre-set criteria (Prolific) who then would get paid to self-complete an online survey on a platform remotely (Qualtrics). This choice of data collection, method could be considered as a limitation of this thesis because, it made it more difficult to trigger perceived complexity and the level of anxiety. Although most of the suggested hypotheses were supported, the manipulation of task complexity in the main study did not give the expected results and the perceived anxiety scores were generally low. Indeed, perceived complexity and anxiety are difficult feelings to incite by using an online survey that involves scenarios asking the participants to 'imagine' they are buying a bag without actually purchasing the bag.

As a result, future direction of study could consist in conducting the same research but using other methods, as suggested below:

Research Direction 3: *Laboratory experiments*

The data collection for this thesis relied on participants customising the bag and then self-completing the questionnaires remotely, on their own computer. Although this method is deemed to put the participants in a more natural setting than in a lab, the extraneous factors cannot be controlled as well as in a laboratory (Sekaran and Bougie, 2020). This could be considered as a limitation of this research and could explain the low scores of perceived complexity and anxiety.

Hence, further research could consider conducting the same experiment but in a laboratory. Lab experiments ensure that participants concentrate more on the task than at home. The variables of interest are strictly controlled by the researcher to assess the cause-and-effect relationships (Malhotra *et al.,* 2003). An additional suggestion for future research would be to use a facial expression recognition software program, e.g., FaceReader. This software used in labs could analyse the facial expressions of the consumer during the customisation task to identity positive and negative emotions in a more accurate way. The results of the analysis of the facial expressions could be complementary to the data collected from the self-completion

questionnaires. It could potentially help to identify perceived complexity and anxiety more easily. As such, results from a lab experiment could obtain better external validity.

Research Direction 4: *Sample with 'actual' customers of the brand*

Another limitation of the present research is the nature of the participants to the survey. They are not 'actual' Longchamp customers but rather people recruited on Prolific platform which may not correspond closely to the profile of customers of the brand.

Therefore, a suggestion for future research to improve external validity of this study could be to collaborate with Longchamp Marketing Department to ask them to have access to their client list to potentially use some their 'actual customers' to participate to the experiment. Some clients could accept to perform the customisation task and then answer the questionnaire.

In addition, by using a real client sample, other constructs could be included in our model such as price sensitivity and delivery time, and satisfaction. As such, an even broader analysis of the positive and negative feelings provided by gift customisation could be conducted.

Research Direction 5: *Use the long version of the CPVT scale*

Merle *et al.* (2010) developed a scale to measure the consumer perceived value conferred by the customisation product and experience in the context of self-purchase (Consumer - Perceived Value Tool, CPVT). However, given the complexity of the model and the length of the questionnaire for the intended research, only the 14 items of the shorter scale version were retained out of 20 items in total. The shortening of the scale could be considered as a limitation of this thesis. Indeed, conducting an analysis with less items may imply less validity and reliability of the results.

Hence, future studies could use the full scale and compare the results to the present study by using the same model. As such, the full breadth of the value dimensions of gift customisation could be studied in more depth. It would be interesting to note if the relationships between the value dimensions and the other constructs of the model, i.e., self-perceived design skill, anxiety and purchase intention would be altered when using the full CPVT scale (Merle *et al.* 2010).

6.4.3 Enhancing the generalisability of research findings

Research Direction 6: *Use a utility product instead of a luxury product*

For this research on gift customisation, a Longchamp bag was the product chosen by the researcher to be customised by participants directly on the brand's own customisation webpage: My Pliage (https://www.longchamp.com/gb/en/mypliage). Longchamp is an established French luxury brand. The fact that we asked participants to design a luxury product limits the generalisability of the results to the luxury sector.

Therefore, it would be interesting to replicate this study, with the same variables but using a utility product such as a computer or a car. The relationships between the constructs would probably differ and value dimensions may also be impacted in a different way. Results could be then compared with our study and complement our findings. Generalisability of this thesis would be enhanced.

Research Direction 7: *Use a broader sample*

Women were chosen as the selected population for the sample of this study. However, this choice, although supported by past literature in the field, obviously limits the generalisability of the findings. Women were chosen over men because of prior articles stating that women are usually in charge of gift purchase in the household (Fisher and Arnold, 1990; Wooten, 2000; Vanhamme and DeBont, 2008; Moreau, Bonney, and Herd, 2011). Since the main topic of this thesis is gift customisation, only female respondents were chosen to participate in the survey.

Nonetheless, future research could attempt to conduct the same survey using either only male participants or choose to mix the gender of the respondents to compare the results with our study. A multi-group analysis, comparing male vs. female groups of participants could be interesting. In any case, using a broader sample would enhance the generalisability of the findings of this thesis.

6.5 CONCLUSION

In the past decade, product customisation has developed globally, across a wide range of product categories, particularly in the context of gifting. While customisation provides experiential benefits to consumers and increased opportunities for retailers, the trade-offs between the experiential benefits and the 'costs' of customisation are not well understood, especially in the context of gifting. This thesis intended to shed light on the effect of the

positive (i.e., self-perceived design skill) and negative (i.e., complexity and anxiety) aspects on value dimension in the context of gift customisation.

The findings show that self-perceived design skill decreases anxiety and has a positive effect on all value dimensions provided by the customisation experience, except uniqueness value. Apart from creative achievement value, all other value dimensions have a positive impact on the purchase intention of the customised bag. As for the negative aspects of gift customisation, the findings confirm that perceived complexity increases anxiety which in turns decreases the perceived value conferred by customisation. However, contrary to expectations, the nature of the recipient, self vs. other, does not affect the relationships hypothesised in the model.

This thesis extends knowledge in the domains of consumer value, customisation and gifting. The main contribution of this study is the extension of the application of Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth 1991) relating to the values influencing consumer choice behaviour by increasing our understanding of the dimensions of consumer value in the context of gift customisation. Further, this research contributes to Benefit Theory (Vershofen 1959) and Behavioural Decision Theory (Edwards, 1954) by demonstrating that gift customisation offers not only functional benefits but also social and psychological benefits to consumers.

Moreover, the application of Self-Concept Theory is extended to the interpersonal gifting situation which implies that consumers not only enjoy owning but also giving customised gifts to close recipient, that reflect their own image. And finally, the findings about the effect of anxiety on perceived value contribute to Gift-Giving Anxiety Theory and indirectly to the founding theories of Impression Management (Goffman, 1959) and Social Anxiety (Schlenker and Leary, 1982).

This research is of value to managers willing to ensure an optimal gift customisation experience and increase online sales. The findings provide useful insights for companies for the development or adaptation of appropriate customisation programs to maximise the value consumers gain from gift customisation and decrease any anxiety they may experience.

REFERENCES

Aichner, T., Shaltoni, A. M., Grosso, C., Forza, C., Haag, A., Haag, L., ... and Welch, I. (2019). 'The impact of perceived advertising creativity on behavioural intentions and quality perceptions in mass customization', *International Journal of Industrial Engineering and Management*, 10(2), pp.131-138.

Alexandrov, A., Lilly, B., and Babakus, E. (2013). 'The effects of social-and self-motives on the intentions to share positive and negative word of mouth', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *41*(5), pp.531-546.

Areni, C. S., Kiecker, P. and Palan, K. M. (1998). 'Is It Better to Give than to Receive? Exploring Gender Differences in the Meaning of Memorable Gifts', *Psychology & Marketing*, 15(1), pp. 81–109.

Babin, B. J., Darden, W. R. and Griffin, M. (1994). 'Work and/or Fun: Measuring Hedonic and Utilitarian Shopping Value', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20(4), pp. 644–656.

Babin, B.J., Gonzalez, C. and Watts, C. (2007). 'Does Santa have a great job? Gift shopping value and satisfaction', *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(10), pp. 895–917.

Bardakci, A. and Whitelock, J. (2004). 'How "ready" are customers for mass customisation? An exploratory investigation', *European Journal of Marketing*, 38(11/12), pp. 1396–1416.

Bardsley, N. (2005). 'Experimental economics and the artificiality of alteration', *Journal of Economic Methodology*, *12*(2), pp. 239-251.

Belk, R.W. (1979). 'Gift Giving Behaviour', *Research in Marketing 2,* Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, pp.95 - 126.

Belk, R.W. (1982). 'Effects of Gift-Giving Involvement on Gift Selection Strategies', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 9(1), pp. 408–412.

Belk, R.W. (1988). 'Possessions and the extended self', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15, pp.139–168.

Belk, R.W. (1996). 'The gifts. What remains to be established is what sort of symbolic'. *Gift Giving: A Research Anthology*, 59.

Bell, E., Bryman, A., and Harley, B. (2018). *Business research methods*. 5th edn. Oxford university press.

Bolton, R. N., and Drew, J. H. (1991). 'A multistage model of customers' assessments of service quality and value', *Journal of consumer research*, *17*(4), 375-384.

Boncinelli, F., Dominici, A., Gerini, F., and Marone, E. (2019). 'Consumers wine preferences according to purchase occasion: Personal consumption and gift-giving', *Food Quality and Preference,* 71, pp.270-278.

Bonney, L., Herd, K. and Moreau, C.P. (2011). 'For You Or For Me? How the Intended Recipient Influences the Customization Experience and Valuations of Customized Products', *Advances in Consumer Research,* 38, pp. 1.

Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2018) *Business Research Methods*. 5th Edition.p.11, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Caplow, T. (1984). 'Rule Enforcement without Visible Means: Christmas Gift Giving in Middletown', *American Journal of Sociology*, 80 (6), pp. 1306-1323.

Chan, C. and Mogilner, C. (2016). 'Experiential Gifts Foster Stronger Social Relationships Than Material Gifts', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 43, pp.913–931.

Cheal, David (1987). 'Showing them you love them: gift giving and the dialectic of intimacy', *Sociological Review,* 35(1), pp. 150-169.

Chin, W. W. (1998). 'Commentary: Issues and opinion on structural equation modeling', *MIS quarterly*, vii-xvi.

Chin, W. W., and Newsted, P. R. (1999). Structural equation modeling analysis with small samples using partial least squares. In R. H. Hoyle (Ed.), *Statistical strategies for small sample research* (pp. 307–341). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chin, W. W. (2010). 'How to write up and report PLS analyses', *Handbook of partial least squares*, pp. 655-690. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.

Churchill, G. (1979). 'A paradigm for developing better measures of marketing constructs', *Journal of Marketing Research,* 16(1), pp. 64–73.

Clarke, K., and Belk, R.W. (1979). 'The Effects of Product Involvement sad Task Definition on Anticipated Consumer Effort', *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 6 (ed.) William L. Wilkie (Ann Arbor: Association for Consumer Research), pp. 313-318.

Cleveland, M., Babin, B.J., Laroche, M., Ward, P. (2003). 'Christmas Gift Search Behaviors: A Three-Country Comparison', *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 15(4), pp. 7–42.

Comte, A., (1830). Course of Positive Philosophy.

Craighead, C. W., Ketchen, D. J., Dunn, K. S., and Hult, G. T. M. (2011). 'Addressing common method variance: guidelines for survey research on information technology, operations, and supply chain management', *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, *58*(3), pp.578-588.

Cronin J.J., Brady M.K., Hult G.T.M (2000). 'Assessing the effects of quality, value and customer satisfaction on consumer behavioural intentions in service environments', *Journal of Retailing, 76*(2), pp. 193–218.

Davis, S. M. (1987). *Future Perfect*. Waltham: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

De Bellis, E., Sprott, D.E., Herrmann, A., Bierhoff, H.-W. and Rohmann, E. (2016). 'The influence of trait and state narcissism on the uniqueness of mass-customized products', *Journal of Retailing*, 92(2), pp. 162-72.

De Bellis, E., Hildebrand C., Ito K., Herrmann A. and Schmitt B. (2019). 'Personalizing the Customization Experience: A Matching Theory of Mass Customization Interfaces and Cultural Information Processing', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(6), pp. 1050–1065.

Dellaert, B. G. C., Stremersch, S. (2005). 'Marketing mass-customized products: Striking the balance between utility and complexity', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 42(2), pp. 219–227.

Dhar, R. and Nowlis, S. M. (2004). 'To Buy or Not to Buy: Response Mode Effects on Consumer Choice', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 41(4), pp. 423–432.

Diamantopoulos, A., and Riefler, P. (2011). 'Using formative measures in international marketing models: A cautionary tale using consumer animosity as an example',

In *Measurement and Research Methods in International Marketing*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Edwards, W. (1954). 'Behavioural Decision Theory', *Annual Review of Psychology*, 12 (1), pp. 473-498.

Feldman, J. M., and Lynch, J. G. (1988). 'Self-generated validity and other effects of measurement on belief, attitude, intention, and behavior', *Journal of applied Psychology*, *73*(3), pp.421.

Fiore, A. M., Lee, S.-E. and Kunz, G. (2004). 'Individual differences, motivations, and willingness to use a mass customization option for fashion products.', *European Journal of Marketing*, 38(7), pp. 835–849.

Fischer, E., Arnold, S.J. (1990). 'More than a labor of love: Gender roles and Christmas gift shopping.', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17, pp. 333–345.

Fogliatto, F.S.; Da Silveira, G.J.C; Borenstein, D. (2012). 'The mass customization decade: An updated review of the literature', *International Journal of Production Economics*, 138, (1) pp.14-25

Fornell, C., and Larcker, D. F. (1981). 'Structural equation models with unobservable variables and measurement error: Algebra and statistics', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (3), pp.382-388

Frank, A. G., Dalenogare, L. S., and Ayala, N. F. (2019). 'Industry 4.0 technologies: Implementation patterns in manufacturing companies', *International Journal of Production Economics*, *210*, pp.15-26.

Franke, N. and Piller, F. (2004). 'Value Creation by Toolkits for User Innovation and Design: The Case of the Watch Market', *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 21(6), pp. 401–415.

Franke, N., Keinz, P. and Steger, C. J. (2009). 'Testing the Value of Customization: When Do Customers Really Prefer Products Tailored to Their Preferences?', *Journal of Marketing*, 73(5), pp. 103–121.

Franke, N. and Schreier, M. (2006). 'Tom Sawyer's great law in mass customization: Why users are willing to pay more for products they design themselves?.', Research paper, Vienna University of Economics and Business Administration.

Franke, N. and Schreier, M. (2008). 'Product uniqueness as a driver of customer utility in mass customization.', *Marketing Letters*, 19(2), pp. 93–107.

Franke, N. and Schreier, M. (2010). 'Why Customers Value Self-Designed Products: The Importance of Process Effort and Enjoyment', *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 27(7), pp. 1020–1031.

Franke, N., Schreier, M. and Kaiser, U. (2010). 'The "I Designed It Myself" Effect in Mass Customization', *Management Science*, 56(1), pp. 125–140.

Gallarza, M. G., Gil-Saura, I. and Holbrook, M. B. (2011) 'The value of value: Further excursions on the meaning and role of customer value', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 10(4), pp. 179–191.

Gallarza, M.G., Arteaga, F., Del Chiappa, G. and Gil-Saura, I. (2015). 'Value dimensions in consumers' experience: Combining the intra- and inter-variable approaches in the hospitality sector', *International Journal of Hospitality Management,* 47, pp. 140-150.

Gallarza, M.G., Arteaga, F., Del Chiappa, G., Gil-Saura, I. and Holbrook, M.B. (2017). 'A multidimensional service-value scale based on Holbrook's typology of customer value: Bridging the gap between the concept and its measurement', *Journal of Service Management,* 28(4), pp. 724-762.

Ganesh Pillai, R. and Krishnakumar, S. (2019). 'Elucidating the emotional and relational aspects of gift giving', *Journal of Business Research*, 101, pp. 194–202.

Gerbing, D. W., Anderson, J. C. (1988). 'An update paradigm for scale development incorporating unidimensionality and its assessment', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 25(2), pp.186–192.

Geisser, S. (1974). 'A predictive approach to the random effect model', *Biometrika*, *61*(1), 101-107.

Gilmore J.H. and Pine J.B. (1997). *The four faces of mass customization*. Harvard Business Review, pp. 91-101.

Givi, J. and Galak, J. (2017). 'Sentimental value and gift giving: Givers' fears of getting it wrong prevents them from getting it right', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 27 (4), pp. 473-479.

Givi, J. and Galak, J. (2019). 'Keeping the Joneses from getting ahead in the first place: Envy's influence on gift giving behavior', *Journal of Business Research*, 101, pp. 375–388.

Givi, J., and Galak, J. (2021). 'Gift Recipients' Beliefs About Occasion-based and Non occasion-based Gifts: The Importance of Signaling Care and Meeting Expectations in Gift Giving', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 32(3), pp. 445–465.

Givi, J., Birg, L., Lowrey, T.M. and Galak, J. (2022). 'An integrative review of gift-giving research in consumer behavior and marketing', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*.

Goffman, Erving (1959). *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Anchor Books.

Grewal, L., Hmurovic, J., Lamberton, C. and Reczek, R. W. (2019). 'The self-perception connection: Why consumers devalue unattractive produce', *Journal of Marketing*, *83*(1), pp. 89-107.

Grønhaug, K. (1972). 'Buying Situation and Buyer's Information Behavior', *European Marketing Research Review*, 7, pp. 33-48.

Grossman, D.M. and Rahinel, R. (2022). 'Achievement-Based Sentimental Value as a Catalyst for Heirloom Gift-Giving', *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, *32*(1), pp.41-56.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1994). 'Competing paradigms in qualitative research', *Handbook of qualitative research*, 2(163-194), pp.105.

Haenlein, M., and Kaplan, A. M. (2004). 'A beginner's guide to partial least squares analysis', *Understanding statistics*, *3*(4), pp.283-297.

Hair, J., Black, W., Babin, B., Anderson, R. and Tatham, R. (2006). *Multivariate Data Analysis*. 6th Edition, Pearson Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River.

Hair, Jr, Hult, G. T. M., Ringle, C., and Sarstedt, M. (2016). *A primer on partial least*

squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM). Sage publications.

Hart, C. (2018). *Doing a Literature Review, Releasing the Social Science Research Imagination.* Sage Publications: London.

Haenlein, M., and Kaplan, A. M. (2004). 'A beginner's guide to partial least squares analysis', *Understanding statistics*, 3(4), pp.283-297.

Heath, M. T., Tynan, C. and Ennew, C. T. (2011). 'Self-gift giving: Understanding consumers and exploring brand messages', *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 17(2), pp. 127–144.

Heath, T. P., Tynan, C. and Ennew, C. (2015). 'Accounts of self-gift giving: nature, context and emotions', *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7/8), pp. 1067–1086.

Hedge, V. G., Kekre, S., Radiv, S., Tadikamalla, P. R. (2005). 'Customization: Impact on product and process performance.', *Production and Operations Management*, 14(4), pp. 388–399.

Henseler, J., and Chin, W. W. (2010). 'A comparison of approaches for the analysis of interaction effects between latent variables using partial least squares path modeling', *Structural equation modeling*, *17*(1), pp.82-109.

Henseler, J., Dijkstra, T. K., Sarstedt, M., Ringle, C. M., Diamantopoulos, A., Straub, D. W., Ketchen, D. J., Hair, J. F., Hult, G. T. M., & Calantone, R. J. (2014). 'Common beliefs and reality about partial least squares: Comments on Rönkkö & Evermann (2013)', *Organizational Research Methods, 17*(1), 182–209.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., and Sinkovics, R. R. (2009). 'The use of partial least squares path modeling in international marketing', *New challenges to international marketing*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Henseler, J., Ringle, C. M., and Sarstedt, M. (2015). 'A new criterion for assessing discriminant validity in variance-based structural equation modeling', *Journal of the academy of marketing science*, *43*(1), pp.115-135.

Hirschman, E. C. and Holbrook, M. B. (1982). 'Hedonic Consumption: Emerging Concepts, Methods and Propositions', *Journal of Marketing*, 46(3), pp. 92–101.

Holbrook, M.B. and Hirschman E.C. (1982). 'The Experiential Aspects of Consumption Fantaisies, Feelings, and Fun', *Journal of consumer Research*, 9, pp. 132-40.

Holbrook, M.B. (1994). *The nature of consumer value. In Service Quality: New Directions in Theory and Practice,* Rust RT, Oliver RL (eds). Sage Publications: Newbury Park, CA; 21–71.

Holbrook, M. B. (1999). *Consumer Value: A Framework for Analysis and Research*. New York: Routledge.

Hui, B. S., and Wold, H. (1982). *Consistency and consistency at large of partial least squares estimates.* In K. G. Jöreskog & H. Wold (Eds.), *Systems under indirect observation, part II* (pp. 119–130). Amsterdam: North-Holland.

Huffman, C. and Kahn, B. E. (1998). 'Variety for Sale: Mass Customization or Mass

Confusion?', *Journal of Retailing*, 74(4), pp. 491–515.

Hwang, J. and Chu, W. (2019) 'The effect of others' outcome valence on spontaneous gift-giving behavior: The role of empathy and self-esteem', *European Journal of Marketing*, 53(4), pp. 785–805.

Joreskog, K.G. and Wold H. (1982). 'The ML and PLS Techniques for Modeling with Latent Variables: Historical and Comparative Aspects', *K. J÷reskog & H. Wold, eds., Systems Under Indirect Observation: Causality, Structure, Prediction*, Part I, Amsterdam: North-Holland, pp.263-270.

Kara, A. and Kaynak, E. (1997). 'Markets of a single customer: exploiting conceptual developments in market segmentation', *European Journal of Marketing*, 31(11/12), pp.873-95.

Kim, J. H. and Jang, S. S. (2014). 'A scenario-based experiment and a field study: A comparative examination for service failure and recovery', *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 41, pp. 125-132.

King, M. F. and Bruner, G. C. (2000). 'Social desirability bias: A neglected aspect of validity testing. *Psychology & Marketing*', *17*(2), pp.79-103.

Kirk, R. E. (2012). *Experimental design: Procedures for the behavioral sciences*. Sage Publications.

Klesse, A.-K., Cornil, Y., Dahl, D.W., and Gros, N. (2019). 'The Secret Ingredient Is Me: Customization Prompts Self-Image-Consistent Product Perceptions', *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(5), pp. 879–893.

Kock, F., Berbekova, A., and Assaf, A. G. (2021). 'Understanding and managing the threat of common method bias: Detection, prevention and control', *Tourism Management*, p. *86*,

Lai, A.W. (1995). 'Consumer Values, Product Benefits and Customer Value: A Consumption Behavior Approach', *Advances in Consumer Research* (22), pp.381–388.

Laroche, M., Chankon K., Saad, G., and Browne, E. (2000). 'A cross-cultural study of the in-store information search strategies for a Christmas gift', *Journal of Business Research*, 42, pp. 113–126.

Larsen, D., and Watson, J. J. (2001). 'A guide map to the terrain of gift value', *Psychology & Marketing*, 18, pp. 889–906.

Leary, M. R., and Kowalski, R. M. (1990). 'Impression management: A literature review and two-component model', *Psychological bulletin*, *107*(1), p.34.

Lemon, K. N., and Verhoef, P. C. (2016). 'Understanding customer experience throughout the customer journey', *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (6), pp. 69-96.

Leroi-Werelds, S. (2019). 'An update on customer value: state of the art, revised typology, and research agenda', *Journal of Service Management*, 30 (5), pp. 650-680.

Levi-Strauss, C. (1965). *The Principle of Reciprocity* in Coser, Lewis A. and Bernard Rosenberg, eds. Sociological Theory: A Book of Readings, New York: The Macmillan Company, 74-84; adapted from Levi-Strauss, Claude (1949), Les Structures Elementaires de

la Parente, Presses Universitaires de France.

Liljander, V., and Strandvik, T. (1993). 'Estimating zones of tolerance in perceived service quality and perceived service value', *International Journal of Service Industry Management*, 4(2), pp.6–28.

Lowes, B., Turner, J., and Wills, G. (1968). 'Patterns of gift giving and their marketing implications', *European Journal of Marketing*, 2 (3), pp.217-229.

Malhotra, N. K., Birks, D. F., Palmer, A., and Koenig-Lewis, N. (2003). 'Market research: an applied approach', *Journal of marketing management*, 27(1), pp.1208-1213.

Malhotra, N., Nunan, D., and Birks, D. (2017) *Marketing research: An applied approach*. Pearson, 2017.

Malone, H., Nicholl, H., and Tracey, C. (2014). Awareness and minimisation of systematic bias in research. *British Journal of Nursing*, *23*(5), pp.279-282.

Mathieu, J. E., and Taylor, S. R. (2006). 'Clarifying conditions and decision points for mediational type inferences in organizational behavior', *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, *27*(8), pp.1031-1056.

Mathwick, C., Malhotra, N. & Rigdon, E. (2001). 'Experiential value: conceptualization, measurement and application in the catalog and Internet shopping environment', *Journal of Retailing,* 77 (1), pp. 39-56.

McIntosh, C. N., Edwards, J. R., and Antonakis, J. (2014). 'Reflections on Partial Least Squares Path Modeling', *Organizational Research Methods, 17*(2), pp. 210-251.

Mauss, M. (1954). *Gifts Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*. London: Cohen and West.

Merle, A., Chandon, J.L, Roux, E., Alizon, F. (2010). 'Perceived Value of the Mass-Customized Product and Mass Customization Experience for Individual Consumers', *Production and Operations Management*, 19(5), pp. 503–514.

Merle, A., Chandon, J.-L. and Roux, E. (2008). 'Understanding the perceived value of mass customization: the distinction between product value and experiential value of co-design', *Recherche et Applications en Marketing (English Edition) (AFM c/o ESCP-EAP)*, 23(3), pp. 27–50.

Mick, D.G., and DeMoss, M. (1990). 'To me from me: A descriptive phenomenology of self-gifts', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 17(1), pp.677–82.

Mick, D.G., DeMoss M. and Faber R.J. (1992). 'A Projective Study of Motivations and Meanings of Self-Gifts: Implications for Retail Management', *Journal of Retailing*, 68(2), pp. 122.

Moreau, C. P., Herd, K. B. (2010). 'To Each His Own? How Comparisons with Others Influence Consumers' Evaluations of Their Self-Designed Products.', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 36(5), pp. 806–819.

Moreau, C. P., Bonney, L. and Herd, K. B. (2011). 'It's the Thought (and the Effort) That Counts: How Customizing for Others Differs from Customizing for Oneself.', *Journal of Marketing*, 75(5), pp. 120–133.

Moreau, C. P., Prandelli, E., Schreier, M., and Hieke, S. (2020). 'Customization in Luxury Brands: Can Valentino Get Personal?', *Journal of Marketing Research)*, 57(5), pp. 937–947.

Nunnally, J.C. and Bernstein, I.H. (1994). 'The Assessment of Reliability', *Psychometric Theory,* 3, pp.248-292.

Oliver, R. L. (1999). '*Value as excellence in the consumption experience'*, In M. B. Holbrook (Ed.), *Consumer value: A framework for analysis and research* (pp. 43–62). London: Routledge.

Olshavsky, R. W. and Dong Hwan Lee (1993). 'Self-Gifts: A Metacognition Perspective', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 20(1), pp. 547–552.

Oppenheimer, D. M., Meyvis, T., and Davidenko, N. (2009). 'Instructional manipulation checks: Detecting satisficing to increase statistical power', *Journal of experimental social psychology*, 45(4), pp.867-872.

Otnes, C., Kim, Y. C. and Lowrey, T. M. (1992). 'Ho, Ho, Woe: Christmas Shopping for "Difficult" People.', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 19(1), pp. 482–487.

Palan, S., and Schitter, C. (2018). 'Prolific. ac—A subject pool for online experiments', *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, 17, pp. 22-27.

Peer, E., Brandimarte, L., Samat, S., and Acquisti, A. (2017). 'Beyond the Turk: Alternative platforms for crowdsourcing behavioral research', *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 70, pp.153-163

Peppers, D., Rogers M. (1997). *The One-to-One Future: Building Relationships One Customer at a Time.* New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Petrick, J.F. (2002). 'Development of a Multi-Dimensional Scale for Measuring the Perceived Value of a Service', *Journal of Leisure Research,* 34 (2), pp. 119-134.

Pine, B.J. (1993). *Mass Customization—The New Frontier in Business Competition.* Harvard Business School Press, Boston.

Pine, J.B. and Gilmore, J. H. (1999). *'Welcome to the Experience Economy'*, Harvard Business Review, 76(4), pp. 97–105.

Pizzetti, M. and Gibbert, M. (2018). 'The value of gift personalization: current insights from the gift recipient's perspective and future research directions', *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 35(5), pp. 512–521.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. Y., and Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). 'Common method biases in behavioral research: a critical review of the literature and recommended remedies', *Journal of applied psychology*, 88(5), pp.879.

Randall, T., Terwiesch, C., and Ulrich, K. T. (2005). 'Principles for user design of customized products', *California Management Review*, 47(4), pp.68-85.

Ringdon, E. E. (1994). Demonstrating the effects of unmodeled random measurement error. *Structural Equation Modeling: A Multidisciplinary Journal*, 1(4), pp.375-380.

Reinartz, W., Haenlein, M., and Henseler, J. (2009). 'An empirical comparison of the efficacy of covariance-based and variance-based SEM', *International Journal of research in Marketing*, 26(4), pp.332-344.

Robben, H.S.J. and Verhallen, T.M.M. (1994). 'Behavioral Costs as Determinants of Cost Perception and Preference Formation for Gifts to Receive and Gifts to Give', *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 15 (2), pp. 333–50.

Ryans, A.B. (1977). 'Consumer gift buying behavior: an exploratory analysis', *Contemporary marketing thought,* 44, pp.99-104.

Salvador F., De Holan P.M., Piller F. (2009). 'Cracking the code of mass customization', *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 50 (3), pp. 71-78.

Sánchez-Fernández, R., and Iniesta-Bonillo, M. Á. (2009). 'Efficiency and quality as economic dimensions of perceived value: Conceptualization, measurement, and effect on satisfaction', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, *16*(6), pp.425-433.

Sandrin E., Trentin A., Grosso C. and Forza C. (2017). 'Enhancing the consumer- perceived benefits of a mass-customized product through its online sales configurator: An empirical examination', *Industrial Management and Data Systems Information*, 117(6), pp.1295-1315.

Sarstedt, M., Henseler, J., and Ringle, C. M. (2011). 'Multigroup analysis in partial least squares (PLS) path modeling: Alternative methods and empirical results', *Measurement and research methods in international marketing*, Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Saunders, M.N.K., Lewis P., Thornhill A. (2016). *Research Methods for Business Students.* 7th edn. Pearson.

Scammon, D. L., Shaw R. T. and Bamossy, G. (1982). 'Is a Gift Always a Gift? an Investigation of Flower Purchasing Behavior across Situations', *Advances in Consumer Research*, 9(1), pp. 531–536.

Schlenker, B. R. and Leary M. R. (1982). 'Social Anxiety and Self-Presentation: Conceptualization and Model', *Psychological Bulletin*, 92 (3), pp. 641–669.

Schmitt, B.H. (1999). *Experiential Marketing*. New York: The Free Press.

Schreier, M. (2006). 'The value increment of mass-customized products: an empirical assessment', *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 5(4), pp. 317–327.

Schwartz, B. (1967). 'The social psychology of the gift', *American journal of Sociology,* 73 (1), pp.1-11.

Segev R., Shoham A., Ruvio A. (2012). 'What does this gift say about me, you, and us? The role of adolescents' gift giving in managing their impressions among their peers', *Psychology & Marketing*, 29 (10), pp. 752-764.

Sekaran, U. and Bougie, R. (2020). '*Research Methods for Business.* 8th edition. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons. Ltd.

Sherry Jr., J. F. (1983). 'Gift Giving in Anthropological Perspective', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10(2), pp. 157–168.

Sherry Jr., J. F. and McGrath, M. A. (1989). *Unpacking the holiday presence: A comparative ethnography of two gift stores*. In Elisabeth Hirschman (Ed.), Interpretative consumer research (pp. 148–167). Provo, UT: Association for Consumer Research.

Sherry Jr., J. F., McGrath, M. A. and Levy, S. J. (1993). 'The Dark Side of the Gift', *Journal of Business Research*, 28(3), pp. 225–244.

Sheth J.N, Newman B.I, Gross B. L. (1991). 'Why we buy what we buy: A theory of consumption values', *Journal of Business Research*, 22 (3), pp.159-170.

Simonson, I. (2005). 'Determinants of Customers' Responses to Customized Offers: Conceptual Framework and Research Propositions', *Journal of Marketing*, 69(1), pp. 32–45.

Singh, J., Crisafulli B., Quamina, L. T., Xue, M. (2020). 'To trust or not to trust: The impact of social media influencers on the reputation of corporate brands in crisis', *Journal of Business Research,* 119, p. 464-480.

Sirgy, M. J. (1982). 'Self-Concept in Consumer Behaviour: A Critical Review', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9(3), pp. 287–300.

Squire, B., Readman J., Brown S., Bessant J. (2004). 'Mass customization: The key to customer value?', *Production Planning and Control*, 15(4), pp. 459– 471.

Snyder, C. R. (1992). 'Product Scarcity by Need for Uniqueness Interaction: A Consumer Catch022 Carousel?', *Basic & Applied Social Psychology*, 13(1), pp. 9–24.

Steffel, M. and Le Boeuf, R. A. (2014). 'Overindividuation in Gift Giving: Shopping for Multiple Recipients Leads Givers to Choose Unique but Less Preferred Gifts', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40(6), pp. 1167–1180.

Stone, M. (1974). 'Cross-validation and multinomial prediction'. *Biometrika*, *61*(3), pp.509-515.

Surprenant, C. F., and Solomon, M. R. (1987). 'Predictability and personalization in the service encounter', *Journal of marketing*, *51*(2), pp.86-96.

Sweeney, J.C. and Soutar, G.N. (2001). 'Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale', *Journal of Retailing,* 77(2), pp. 203-220.

Tian, K. T., Bearden, W. O. and Hunter, G. L. (2001). 'Consumers' Need for Uniqueness: Scale Development and Validation', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 28(1), pp. 50–66.

Trentin, A., Perrin, E. and Forza, C. (2014). 'Increasing the consumer-perceived benefits of a mass-customization experience through sales-configurator capabilities', *Computers in Industry*, 65(4), pp. 693-705.

Tronvoll, B., Brown, S. W., Gremler, D. D., and Edvardsson, B. (2011). 'Paradigms in service research', *Journal of Service management*, 22 (5), pp. 560-585.

Tu, Q., Vondermbse, M. A., Ragu-Nathan T. S. (2001). 'The impact of time-based manufacturing practices on mass customization and value to customer', *Journal of Operations Management*, 19(2), pp. 201–217.

Valenzuela, A., Dhar, R. and Zettelmeyer, F. (2009). 'Contingent Response to Self-Customization Procedures: Implications for Decision Satisfaction and Choice', *Journal of Marketing Research,* 46(6), pp. 754–763.

Valtin, A. (2005). *'Der wert von luxusmarken'* [The value of luxury brands]. Wiesbaden: Deutscher, UniversitatsVerlag.

Vanhamme, J., and De Bont, C. J. (2008). 'Surprise gift' purchases: customer insights from the small electrical appliances market', *Journal of Retailing*, *84*(3), pp.354-369.

Varshneya, G. and Das, G. (2017). 'Experiential value: Multi-item scale development and validation', *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services,* 34, pp. 48-57.

Vershofen, W. (1959). '*Die Marktentnahme als Kernstuck derWirtschaftsforschung'* [Consumption as the core of economic research]. Berlin: C. Heymann Verlag.

Verhoef, P. C., Lemon, K. N., Parasuraman, A., Roggeveen, A., Tsiros, M., and Shlesinger, L. A. (2009). 'Customer experience creation: determinants, dynamics and management strategies', *Journal of Retailing,* 85(1), pp.31–41.

Vigneron, F. and Johnson, L. W. (2004). 'Measuring perceptions of brand luxury', *Journal of Brand Management*, 11(6), pp. 484–506.

Walter, A., Ritter, T., and Gemünden, H. G. (2001). 'Value creation in buyer-seller relationships: Theoretical considerations and empirical results from a supplier's perspective', *Industrial Marketing Management*, 30(4), pp. 365–377.

Ward, M. K. and Broniarczyk, S. M. (2013). 'It's Not Me, It's You: How Gift Giving Creates Giver Identity Threat as a Function of Social Closeness', *Journal of Consumer Research*, pp. 270–287.

Weisfeld-Spolter, S., Rippé, C.B. and Gould, S. (2015). 'Impact of giving on self and impact of self on giving', *Psychology & Marketing*, 32(41), pp. 1 - 14.

Vershofen, W. (1959). '*Die Marktentnahme als Kernstuck derWirtschaftsforschung'* [Consumption as the core of economic research]. Berlin: C. Heymann Verlag.

Woodruff, R.B. and Gardial, F.S. (1996). '*Know Your Customer: New Approaches to Understanding Customer Value and Satisfaction'*. Blackwell Business: Malden.

Woodruff, R. B. (1997). 'Customer Value: The Next Source for Competitive Advantage', *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 25(2), pp. 139.

Wooten, D. B. (2000). 'Qualitative Steps toward and Expanded Model of Anxiety in Gift-Giving', *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(1), pp. 84–95.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods.* 5th edition. Thousand Oaks CA. Sage Publications.

Yoo, J. and Park, M. (2016). 'The effects of e-mass customization on consumer perceived value, satisfaction, and loyalty toward luxury brands', *Journal of Business Research*, 69(12), pp. 5775–5784.

Yue, J., Xia, Y., Tran, T., Chen, B. (2009). 'Using frontier portfolios to improve make-to-order operations', *Production and Operations Management*, 18(2), pp. 226–239.

Zeithaml, V. A. (1988). 'Consumer Perceptions of Price, Quality, and Value: A Means-End Model and Synthesis of Evidence', *Journal of Marketing*, 52(3), pp. 2–22.

WEBSITES

Accenture, 2015, Improving Customer Experience is Top Business Priority for Companies Pursuing Digital Transformation, viewed on 13th March 2016,

https://newsroom.accenture.com/news/improving-customer-experience-is-top-business-priority-for-companies-pursuing-digital-transformation-according-to-accenture-study.htm

CNBC, 2020, Amazon's new custom T-shirt service asks you to upload photos of yourself, viewed on 20th December 2020, https://www.cnbc.com/2020/12/15/amazon-made-for-you-uses-virtual-body-double-to-create-custom-t-shirts.html

Dataintelo, 2019, Personalized Gifts Market Size, Growth, Global Industry Report, 2026, viewed on 6th of January 2020, https://dataintelo.com/report/personalized-gifts-market/?utm_campaign=copy

Deloitte, 2015, Made-to-order, The Rise of Mass Personalisation, The Deloitte Consumer Review, viewed on 26th July 2016, https://www2.deloitte.com/ch/en/pages/consumer-business/articles/made-to-order-the-rise-of-mass-personalisation.html

PR Newswire, 2020, $43.3 Billion Worldwide Personalized Gifts Industry to 2027 - Impact of COVID-19 on the Market, viewed on 12th January 2021, https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/43-3-billion-worldwide-personalized-gifts-industry-to-2027---impact-of-covid-19-on-the-market-301114060.html

Technavio, 2018, Personalized Gifts Market in US by Product and Distribution Channel, Forecast and Analysis 2021-2025, viewed on 30th August 2021, https://www.technavio.com/report/personalized-gifts-market-in-US-industry-analysis&nowebphttps://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/43-3-billion-worldwide-personalized-gifts-industry-to-2027---impact-of-covid-19-on-the-market-301114060.html

The Financial Times, 2016, Brands Push into Personalised Packaging, viewed on 15th of February 2017, https://www.ft.com/content/0f39a94a-2e49-11e6-a18d-a96ab29e3c95

The New York Times, 2020, Customers want Customisation and Companies are giving it to Them, viewed on 14th March 2021, https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/18/business/customization-personalized-products.html

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A. Assessments of Merle et al. (2010)'s Full and Short Scales

A1. Reliability and Validity of the Full and Short Consumer-Perceived Value Tool Scales (n_2=228)

	Jöreskog's ρ	Average variance extracted (%)	Shared variance and correlations in parenthesis				
			UV (%)	UnV	SEV	HV	CAV
Full 20-item scale							
UV	0.898	68.9		(0.715)	(0.829)	(0.655)	(0.779)
UnV	0.912	67.7	51.2		(0.685)	(0.697)	(0.706)
SEV	0.942	80.2	68.7	46.9%		(0.547)	(0.643)
HV	0.915	68.4	42.9	48.6%	29.9%		(0.832)
CAV	0.805	67.5	60.7	49.8%	41.3%	69.2%	
Short 14-item scale							
UV	0.888	72.6		(0.725)	(0.838)	(0.662)	(0.781)
UnV	0.887	72.4	52.6		(0.686)	(0.707)	(0.726)
SEV	0.925	80.5	70.2	47.06%		(0.564)	(0.654)
HV	0.908	76.8	43.8	49.98%	31.81%		(0.842)
CAV	0.807	67.8	61	52.71%	42.77%	70.90%	

UV, utilitarian value; UnV, uniqueness value; SEV, self-expressiveness value; HV, hedonic value; CAV, creative achievement value.

A2. The Short Consumer-Perceived Value Tool Scale: Ranking of Items by External and Internal Validity

		Rank of external validity	Rank of internal validity	Sum of ranks	Decision
U1.	This pair of shoes is exactly what I had hoped for	1	1	2	Retained
U3.	The pair of shoes I created fits my expectations	4	4	8	Deleted
U4.	I could create the pair of shoes that was the most adapted to what I was looking for	2	2	4	Retained
U5.	I could create the pair of shoes I really wanted to have	3	3	6	Retained
Un1.	At least I will be the only one to have these shoes	4	5	9	Deleted
Un2.	With these shoes, I will not look like everybody else	1	1	2	Retained
Un3.	Having these shoes will enable me to stand out from the others	5	3	8	Deleted
Un4.	With this program, I could design shoes that others will not have	2	2	4	Retained
Un5.	With this pair of shoes, I have my small element of differentiation compared to others	3	4	7	Retained
SE1.	This customized pair of shoes represents who I am	4	3	7	Deleted
SE2.	I could create a pair of shoes that is just like me	1	1	2	Retained
SE3.	This pair of shoes reflects exactly who I am	2	4	6	Retained
SE4.	This pair of shoes is in my own image	3	2	5	Retained
H1.	I found it fun to customize this pair of shoes	4	3	7	Retained
H2.	I really enjoyed creating this pair of shoes	2	1	3	Retained
H3.	Customizing this pair of shoes was a real pleasure	1	2	3	Retained
H4.	Modifying this pair of shoes was enjoyable	5	4	9	Deleted
H5.	Designing a pair of shoes is a great play activity	3	5	8	Deleted
CA3.	Nike gave me a lot of autonomy in the creation of this pair of shoes, and I really enjoyed it	2	2	4	Retained
CA4.	I could give my creativity free rein while designing this pair of shoes	1	1	2	Retained

UV, utilitarian value; UnV, uniqueness value; SEV, self-expressiveness value; HV, hedonic value; CAV, creative achievement value.

A3. First Order Confirmatory Foactorial Analysis Results of the Full and Short Consumer-Perceived Value Tool Scales (n_2=228)

		Full 20-item scale					Short 14-item scale				
		UV	UnV	SEV	HV	CAV	UV	UnV	SEV	HV	CAV
U1.	This pair of shoes is exactly what I had hoped for	0.891*					0.890				
U3.	The pair of shoes I created fits my expectations	0.755					—				
U4.	I could create the pair of shoes that was the most adapted to what I was looking for	0.843					0.844				
U5.	I could create the pair of shoes I really wanted to have	0.825					0.821				
Un1.	At least I will be the only one to have these shoes		0.690					—			
Un2.	With these shoes, I will not look like everybody else		0.872					0.887			
Un3.	Having these shoes will enable me to stand out from the others		0.845					—			
Un4.	With this program, I could design shoes that others will not have		0.856					0.817			
Un5.	With this pair of shoes, I have my small element of differentiation compared to others		0.839					0.848			
SE1.	This customized pair of shoes represents who I am			0.893					—		
SE2.	I could create a pair of shoes that is just like me			0.908					0.817		
SE3.	This pair of shoes reflects exactly who I am			0.876					0.884		
SE4.	This pair of shoes is in my own image			0.906					0.874		
H1.	I found it fun to customize this pair of shoes				0.851					0.832	
H2.	I really enjoyed creating this pair of shoes				0.897					0.920	
H3.	Customizing this pair of shoes was a real pleasure				0.883					0.875	
H4.	Modifying this pair of shoes was enjoyable				0.757					—	
H5.	Designing a pair of shoes is a great play activity				0.732					—	
CA3.	Nike gave me a lot of autonomy in the creation of this pair of shoes, and I really enjoyed it					0.752					0.749
CA4.	I could give my creativity free rein while designing this pair of shoes					0.888					0.892

*factor loadings; UV, utilitarian value; UnV, uniqueness value; SEV, self-expressiveness value; HV, hedonic value; CAV, creative achievement value.

APPENDIX B- Realism Test - Complexity of the Customisation Tool

How complex did you find the task of customising the bag from 1 (easiest) to 7 (hardest)?	
High Complexity Condition	Score
Respondent #1	7
Respondent #2	4
Respondent #3	6
Respondent #4	3
Respondent #5	6
Low Complexity Condition	Score
Respondent #1	2
Respondent #2	1
Respondent #3	2
Respondent #4	3
Respondent #5	3

APPENDIX C: Brief and Questionnaire on Qualtrics

Appendix C1. Brief

Dear Participant,

You are invited to complete this survey, which is part of an academic research project being conducted at Kingston Business School, Kingston University London (UK). My name is Celine Stiris and I am a PhD student under the supervision of Professor Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley at Kingston Business School and Professor Jaywant Singh at Southampton Business School. My research seeks to understand the customer experience when customising a product.

If you choose to participate in this research study, there would be no known risks or disadvantages for you. Indeed, the research has received a favourable ethical opinion from the Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston

University London. Rather, your responses may help to improve academic research practice and help to develop new theories in our research field.

Your participation to this research project is totally voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to take part in it. Indeed, if you choose not to participate there will be no negative consequences for you.

However, if you agree to participate, there are two parts to complete in the survey. The first one is the customisation of a bag online that will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The second part is a survey questionnaire that should take another 10 minutes to complete. Instructions on how perform the online customisation of the bag and how to complete the survey questionnaire are given below.

Remember, that even if you choose to answer the survey you can leave it at any time by simply closing your browser and without giving any reason. If you do so, your responses will be discarded and not used.

All information we gain from you will be kept anonymous and strictly confidential and will be stored in a secure manner according to the data management requirements specified in the 2018 Data Protection Act. In particular, any personal information that could identify you will be removed or coded. Also, all data files and back-up copies will be kept in digital format and anonymised. Data will be encrypted and stored in discrete folders on a password protected computer and/or on the Kingston University secure server. The only people who will have access to the information will be my supervisors Professor Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley, Professor Jaywant Singh and myself Celine Stiris, meaning that it will not be shared with other people. Data will be kept for at least ten years. After that time it will be either destroyed or further de-identified, meaning that we will replace any of your identifying information with a code that does not directly identify you.

Note, that your answers will be aggregated for analysis and used for research purpose only. In the reporting of the project, no information will be released which will enable the reader to identify who the respondent was.

If you wish to know what the findings of this project are, please contact either myself or my supervisors at the email addresses provided below. Once the data have been processed and analysed, we should be able to share the results with you.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, if you feel you have been placed at risk, or for any other type of complaint please email either me or my supervisors using the contact details provided below. If you are not satisfied yet, please contact

Professor Jill Schofield who is the Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences at Kingston University London. Professor Schofield's contact details are provided below.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours Sincerely

Celine Stiris, PhD student

Contact details:

- PhD student Celine Stiris: K1651297@kingston.ac.uk

- Supervisor Professor Francesca Dall'Olmo Riley: f.d.riley@kingston.ac.uk

- Supervisor Jaywant Singh
  J.Singh@soton.ac.uk

- Dean of the Faculty of Business and Social Sciences Professor Jill Schofield:
  Kingston University London, Penrhyn Road, Kingston upon Thames KT1 2EE.
-
  Email: j.schofield@kingston.ac.uk Tel: 020 8417 9000 ext. 65229.

Statement by participant

- I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet/letter of invitation for this study. I have been informed of the purpose, risks, and benefits of taking part in the study.
- I am 18 years of age or older.
- I understand what my involvement will entail, and any questions have been answered to my satisfaction.
- I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can withdraw at any time without prejudice.
- I understand that all information obtained will be confidential and that it will be handled and treated according to the data management requirements specified in the 2018 Data Protection Act.
- I agree that research data gathered for the study may be published provided that I cannot be identified as a subject.
- Contact information has been provided should I (a) wish to seek further information from the investigator at any time for purposes of clarification (b) wish to make a complaint.

Please select your choice below. Clicking on the "I agree to participate" button indicates that you have read and agree with the above. Once you have selected "I agree to participate", you can go to the next page to start the survey.

- ○ I agree to participate
- ○ I do not agree to participate

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Please pay attention when reading the instructions and questions in this survey. The data will be of no use if you do not follow the instructions provided and answer all the questions.

Please note that we have included attention check questions/items in the survey. If you fail these questions/items, you will automatically be brought to the end of the survey without the possibility of entering your Prolific Academic ID. If this happens, you will **NOT be paid** for your response. Please pay attention whilst reading the scenarios and questions to avoid your submission being rejected.

During this survey, you will be asked to customise a "Longchamp" bag on a website and then to complete a questionnaire about your customisation experience.

Longchamp is a well-known French brand, which has been making luxury bags for the past 70 years.   Their most famous bag is called "Le Pliage". Longchamp offer customers the possibility to customise a "Pliage" bag thanks to a special online programme called "My Pliage".

Appendix C2. Example of Questionnaire

Q1- Have you ever customised anything online before?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Q2. How familiar are you with the Longchamp brand?

(1= not at all familiar, 7 = very familiar)

◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 ◯ 7

Q3. How luxurious would you describe the Longchamp brand?

(1= not at all luxurious and 7= very luxurious)

◯ 1 ◯ 2 ◯ 3 ◯ 4 ◯ 5 ◯ 6 ◯ 7

You will find a link at the bottom of this page after you have carefully read the following instructions:

Step 1: Click on the link that will direct you to the "My Pliage" website where you will be able to customise a **"My Pliage Signature"** bag.

◊Please **ONLY** choose to customise the "My Pliage **Signature**" **NOT** "My Pliage Club". This option is to be found in the top half of the homepage.

◊ **Please imagine that you are designing this bag, priced at around £200, as a gift to yourself for a special occasion**.

◊ It is critical that you click on **EACH** icon under "CREATE YOUR OWN" to select your preferred choice for **ALL 6** customisation options for My Pliage Signature bag: **Shape, Body, Trimming, Finish, Initials and Stamping.** Please **do not skip** any customisation option.

◊ During the customisation process, please be aware of the positive and/or negative feelings you experience. You should focus on: How enjoyable and/or challenging is it to customise this expensive leather bag as a gift to yourself for a special occasion?

You will be asked questions about your customisation experience after completing the customisation task.

◊ At the end of the task, **you must IMAGINE** that you would purchase the bag you have customised for yourself for a special occasion. **DO NOT** actually purchase the bag online while completing the survey.

Step 2: Once you are satisfied with the bag you have customised for yourself for a special occasion, **CLICK ON "ADD TO BAG"** <u>AND BEFORE</u> you close the Longchamp website window, please **COPY the URL link** of the "shopping cart" webpage showing the bag you have just customised with the summary of all the options you have chosen as well as the price.

Step 3: Come back to the survey page and **PASTE the URL link** of the "shopping cart page" showing the bag you have customised in the text box on the survey page where it says: **"PLEASE PASTE URL LINK HERE".** Then complete the questionnaire regarding your customisation experience.

For your information, <u>you will be paid only if you have copied-pasted the link showing the customised bag as per the above brief.</u>

When you are ready, please click on the link below that will direct you to the "My Pliage" website to start customising the "**My Pliage Signature**" bag. Remember to customise all the options available. When you have completed the customisation of the bag, **remember to copy the url link, then come back to the survey page and paste the link in the space provided to complete the questionnaire.**

 CLICK ON LINK NOW: http://www.longchamp.com/gb/en/mypliage

Q4 – PLEASE PASTE URL LINK HERE below of the "shopping cart" webpage showing the bag you have just customised:

Q5- Please state if you agree or disagree with the following statement:

I have customised a "My Pliage Club" bag:

○ Agree

○ Disagree

Q6- Please tick the customisation options you used during the customisation task:

○ Shape

○ Body Colour

○ Trimming

○ Finish

○ Initials

○ Stamping

Q7. You customised 6 features of the "My Pliage Signature" bag (Shape, Body, Trimming, Finish, Initials and Stamping), choosing between 3 to 17 options for each feature. Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- With regard to the number of choices I had to make, I think there was too much complexity
- With regard to the number of choices I had to make, I think there was too much confusion
- With regard to customising the bag, I think the decisions I had to make were very difficult

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q8- Please state the extent to which you experienced any of the following feelings while customising the Pliage bag as a gift to yourself for a special occasion:

- The number of customisation alternatives available made me feel stressed
- During the customisation task, I felt nervous of making the wrong choices
- The possibility of making wrong customisation choices made me feel frustrated

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q9- System check: please tick "strongly disagree" here:

○ Strongly Disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q10. Please state the extent to which you agree with the following statements about yourself:

- I am a good designer

- I have the skills necessary to design a good bag

- Creativity is an important part of my identity

- Friends would select me to design a bag on their behalf

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11 a- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- This customised bag is exactly what I had hoped as a gift to myself

- I could create the bag that is the most suitable for what I was looking for

- I could create the bag I really wanted as a gift to myself

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11 b- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- With this customised bag, I will not look like everybody else

- With this customisation program, I could design a bag for myself that others will not have

- With this customised bag, I will have a small element of differentiation compared to others

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11c- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- I could create a bag that is just like me

166

- This customised bag reflects exactly who I am.

- This customised bag is in my image.

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11 d- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- I found it fun to customise this bag

- I really enjoyed creating this bag

- Customising the bag was a real pleasure

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11 e- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to the customisation task you have just performed:

- I had a lot of autonomy in the creation of the bag and I really enjoyed it

- I could give my creativity full freedom while designing the bag

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Q11 f- Please state the extent to which you agree/disagree with each of the following statements relating to how the customisation task you have just performed makes you feel:

- Customising this bag will help me to feel acceptable

- Customising this bag will improve the way I am perceived

- Customising this bag will make a good impression on other people

- Customising this bag will give me social approval

○ Strongly disagree

○ Disagree

○ Somewhat disagree

○ Neither Agree nor Disagree

○ Somewhat Agree

○ Agree

○ Strongly Agree

Now, based on your experience of customising a Longchamp bag, please answer the following questions.

Q12a- If money was not a concern, how likely is it that you would purchase the bag you have just customised? (1=unlikely and 7= likely)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Q12b - If money was not a concern, how probable is it that you would purchase the bag you have just customised? (1= improbable and 7= probable)

○ 1 ○ 2 ○ 3 ○ 4 ○ 5 ○ 6 ○ 7

Q13- What is your age group?

○ 18-24

○ 25-34

○ 35-44

○ 45-54

○ 55-60

○ over 60

Q14- What is your highest education level completed?

○ Secondary education (e.g GCSE)

○ High school diploma/ A-levels

○ Technical/community college

○ Undergraduate degree (BA/BSc/other)

○ Graduate degree (MA/MSc/MPhil/other)

○ Doctorate degree (PhD/other)

Q15- What is your personal income?

○ Less than £30,000

○ £30,000 - £39,999

○ £40,000 - £49,999

○ £50,000 - £59,999

○ £60,000 - £69,999

○ £70,000 - £79,999

○ £80,000 - £89,999

○ £90,000 - £99,999

○ Over £100,000

Please enter your Prolific ID:

Thank you very much for participating to this survey. Your contribution is valuable. Please click on the submit button.

APPENDIX D: Screenshots Longchamp Customised Bags – Main Study

Appendix D.1. Longchamp customised bags – High Complexity Group

Appendix D.2 Longchamp customised bags – Low Complexity Group

LONGCHAMP
PARIS

MY PLIAGE

SHOULDER BAG	Length (top):46 cm Length (bottom):31 cm Width:19 cm Height:30 cm Handle drop:24 cm
BODY COLOR	Powder pink
TRIMMING	Brown
ACCESSORIES FINISH	Gold
ACCESSORIES - SNAP COLOR	Gold

MORE INFORMATION

LONGCHAMP
PARIS

MY PLIAGE

TOP-HANDLE S	Length (top):38 cm Length (bottom):25 cm Width:16 cm Height:23 cm Handle drop:11 cm
BODY COLOR	Blue
TRIMMING	Brown
ACCESSORIES FINISH	Gold
ACCESSORIES - SNAP COLOR	Gold

TOP-HANDLE S
£215.00

GO TO CHECKOUT

BACK TO CUSTOMIZATION

SHARE

MORE INFORMATION

MY PLIAGE SIGNATURE