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Beauty Beyond Years: Can Luxury Cosmetics Influence Self-Esteem in Older Adults?

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Department of Marketing, Strategy and Operations

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To my wonderful sisters,
whose love and encouragement have been my constant source of strength and inspiration.

To my dear friends,
for their support and for always reminding me to take breaks and enjoy life's little luxuries.

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Resumo

Numa era em que o envelhecimento da população continua a redefinir as normas sociais, o aumento do uso de cosmética de luxo entre as pessoas idosas destaca aspirações em torno da beleza e autocuidado. Este estudo investiga o impacto da utilização de cosmética de luxo na autoestima, bem-estar subjetivo e qualidade de vida entre as pessoas idosas e identifica perfis de utilização distintos dentro deste grupo. Neste estudo participaram 312 pessoas idosas (M = 67,9 ± 6,5 anos), utilizando-se os seguintes instrumentos: (1) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; (2) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule; (3) Satisfaction with Life Scale; (4) Quality of Life Scale; e (5) Questionário sociodemográfico, saúde, estilo de vida e envolvimento com cosmética de luxo. A análise de regressão linear revelou uma influência baixa, mas estatisticamente significativa, do uso de cosmética de luxo na autoestima, bem-estar subjetivo e qualidade de vida. A análise de clusters identificou três grupos: Cluster 1, com níveis elevados de utilização de cosmética de luxo, autoestima, bem-estar subjetivo e qualidade de vida; Cluster 2, com baixo envolvimento com cosmética de luxo, e baixos níveis de autoestima, bem-estar subjetivo e qualidade de vida; e Cluster 3, também com baixo envolvimento com cosmética de luxo, mas mantendo níveis moderados de autoestima, bem-estar subjetivo e qualidade de vida. Esta investigação contribui para a compreensão da relação entre o consumo de luxo e o envelhecimento, salientando a importância de um marketing inclusivo que valoriza todas as idades e reconhece os desejos e desafios únicos dos consumidores mais velhos.

Palavras-Chave: Cosmética de luxo; autoestima; pessoas idosas; bem-estar subjetivo; qualidade de vida.

Sistema de Classificação JEL: D12 - Economia do Consumo: Análise Empírica; I31 – Bem-estar geral, bem-estar

Abstract

In an era when an aging population continues to redefine social norms, the increased use of luxury cosmetics among older people highlights aspirations around beauty and self-care. This study investigates the impact of luxury cosmetics use on self-esteem, subjective well-being and quality of life among older people and identifies distinct usage profiles within this group. This study involved 312 older people (M = 67.9 ± 6.5 years) using the following instruments: (1) Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale; (2) Positive and Negative Affect Schedule; (3) Satisfaction with Life Scale; (4) Quality of Life Scale; and (5) Sociodemographic, health, lifestyle, and engagement with luxury cosmetics questionnaire. Linear regression analysis revealed a low but statistically significant influence of luxury cosmetics use on self-esteem, subjective well-being and quality of life. Cluster analysis identified three groups: Cluster 1, with high levels of luxury cosmetics usage, self-esteem, subjective well-being, and quality of life; Cluster 2, with low luxury cosmetics engagement, and low levels of self-esteem, subjective well-being, and quality of life; and Cluster 3, also with low engagement with luxury cosmetics but maintaining moderate levels of self-esteem, subjective well-being, and quality of life. This research contributes to the understanding of the relationship between luxury consumption and aging, highlighting the importance of inclusive marketing that values all ages and recognizes the unique desires and challenges of older consumers.

Keywords: Luxury cosmetics; self-esteem; older adults; subjective well-being; quality of life.

JEL Classification codes: D12 - Consumer Economics: Empirical Analysis; I31 – General Welfare, Well-Being

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Introduction

Rooted deeply in human history, the relentless pursuit of physical beauty continues to drive individuals to seek different ways to enhance their appearance (Kawakubo & Oguchi, 2023). Marketing strategies for beauty and cosmetic products significantly shape people's self-perceptions and self-esteem, with a particularly pronounced impact on women (Craddock et al., 2019).

The aging process is a natural and unalterable occurrence in the human body, marked by a slow deterioration in the biological functions of organs, including the skin (Evangelista et al., 2022a). When individuals resist accepting the changes in their appearance and the physical limitations associated with aging, they tend to avoid confronting new challenges and engaging in social activities (Jones & Kramer, 2016). This resistance, in turn, leads to a decline in individual's evaluation of their worth, also known as self-esteem (Evangelista et al., 2022a) and well-being which encompasses, life satisfaction, optimal functioning and emotional fulfillment, including experiencing positive emotions such as happiness and contentment (Cosco et al., 2017; Ruggeri et al., 2020).

In today’s society, cosmetics have evolved into a fundamental component of women's daily routines, potentially contributing to their self-esteem, which refers to an individual's overall evaluation of their self-worth (Hepper, 2023). Many women eagerly keep pace with the latest makeup brand launches in the market and tend to prefer luxury makeup brands over more conventional drugstore alternatives, even when both serve similar purposes (Rajan et al., 2019). Additionally, women who place a higher emphasis on their physical appearance may allocate a greater portion of their budget to a wide array of beauty products, extending beyond makeup (Mafra et al., 2022). It was also found that self-esteem is positively associated with subjective well-being (SWB), which pertains to an individual's emotional (known as positive and negative emotional experiences) and cognitive assessments (life satisfaction judgements) of their own life (Baumeister et al., 2003; Carver & Buchanan, 2016). Moreover, there is a strong and positive association between self-esteem and one's quality of life (QoL), since they reflect an individual's self-worth and overall life satisfaction (Machado et al., 2023). This underscores the multifaceted nature of the pursuit of luxury beauty and the ways it intersects with individual identity and self-concept.

The beauty industry, particularly the luxury cosmetics segment, has witnessed a surge in popularity and relevance in recent times, paralleling the paradigm shift in consumers' desire for luxury products (Hennigs et al., 2015). The relentless pursuit of luxury beauty is interwoven

with consumers' desires for self-improvement, empowerment, and a sense of uniqueness (Gummerus et al., 2023; von Wallpach et al., 2020).

Current research on cosmetics has focused on the broader concept of psychological well-being, encompassing aspects such as self-esteem, SWB, and overall QoL. For instance, Palumbo et al. (2017) and Mafra et al. (2022) found that individuals tend to experience an increase in self-esteem when they use cosmetics regularly. This boost in self-esteem can potentially lead to improved performance in daily life tasks, as individuals may feel more confident and secure in their physical appearance. Earlier studies have also highlighted that self-esteem is an important predictor of SWB (Diener et al., 2015; Diener & Diener, 1995; Du et al., 2017) and that having a positive self-esteem was related to higher QoL (Hemati & Kiani, 2016; Kermode & MacLean, 2001).

However, there is a dearth of studies exploring these concepts in the luxury cosmetics field, particularly for aged individuals. The purchase of luxury items reveals a notable correlation with self-esteem, implying that individuals may employ acquiring such goods to maintain or enhance their sense of self-worth and personal gratification (Truong & McColl, 2011), as well as for the hidden significance they convey, reflecting the level of recognition from others and fulfilling individuals' emotional needs (Li et al., 2022). Another study focused on luxury cosmetic brands, indicated that consumer willingness to purchase and brand preferences are shaped by their psychological and symbolic attributes (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017). A recent study has also revealed that self-esteem significantly influences women's purchase intentions for luxury makeup brands, as they seek to fulfill their sense of self-worth and reward their personal needs (Mobil et al., 2019). Additionally, literature has suggested that motivations for purchasing luxury goods vary with age (Schade et al., 2016); however, prior research predominantly has been focused on adolescents and young adults, with little exploration among middle-aged and older adults. For instance, Amatulli et al. (2015) found that older consumers with a younger self-perception prioritize brand image over product features when selecting luxury items, emphasizing that their purchasing decisions are more influenced by the reputation of the brand rather than the specific attributes of the product.

Given that existing research has primarily focused on non-luxury cosmetics and younger demographics, there remains a significant gap in understanding the specific effects of luxury cosmetics on the self-esteem, SWB, and QoL of older adults. Exploring the relationships between these factors offers valuable insights into the unique needs and experiences of older individuals with luxury cosmetics, paving the way for targeted interventions and support systems that can enhance their well-being, QoL, and promote healthy aging. Additionally, such

research can inform consumer behavior studies and aid in the development of tailored products and marketing strategies for this growing demographic. As a result, the following research questions emerge:

RQ1: Is there an influence of luxury cosmetics usage on older adults' self-esteem, subjective well-being, and quality of life?

RQ2: Do groups of older people with similar usage behavior of luxury cosmetics exist, and do these groups differ in terms of self-esteem, subjective well-being, quality of life, or their sociodemographic characteristics?

While there is limited research focusing on the intersection of luxury cosmetics and self-esteem among older adults, this market segment holds significant potential. Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by examining how older adults engage with luxury cosmetics and the resulting impact on their self-esteem. Through the identification of distinct subgroups within this demographic and an exploration of their cosmetic preferences and behaviors, this research seeks to uncover the nuanced variations in SWB and QoL among older adults based on their usage of luxury cosmetics. Expanding upon Chen et al.'s research (2018) highlighting the significance of attitudes toward aging and self-esteem in predicting physical and mental health outcomes, this study seeks to provide valuable insights into the changing landscape of beauty care behaviors among older populations. Ultimately, these findings will be instrumental in informing cosmetics companies' marketing strategies and communication tactics, enabling them to promote self-esteem and well-being among older adults through their advertising campaigns.

CHAPTER 1

Literature Review

1.1. Luxury cosmetics in the market

The global expansion of the luxury market has sparked interest within the research community, leading to a surge in studies concerning the marketing of luxury goods and services in recent years (Ko et al., 2019). In fact, in 2023, the luxury goods market generated around US$354.80 billion in revenue. Projections have suggested that it is expected to reach approximately US$418.9 billion by 2028, reflecting a steady annual growth rate of 3.38% during that period, pointing to the industry's potential for ongoing expansion (Statista Market Insights, 2023).

Luxury cosmetics are high-end beauty products characterized by premium ingredients, and exclusive brand positioning. The global luxury cosmetics industry is segmented into skincare, haircare, and make-up, including products such as moisturizers, anti-aging items, foundation, eye shadow, lipstick, and others (Dhillon et al., 2022). The market for luxury cosmetics yielded approximately $62.3 billion in revenue in 2022, and it is poised to grow to around $87 billion by 2028, with a notable contribution from premium skincare items. Well-known luxury cosmetic brands like Estée Lauder and Lancôme (a subsidiary of L'Oréal) are some of the most valuable brands in the personal care industry. Estée Lauder's revenue has notably grown, reaching approximately $17.7 billion in 2022, with makeup contributing significantly at about 24% of its total sales. Likewise, L'Oréal's Luxe category has consistently expanded and now stands as the company's largest sales segment (Statista Research Department, 2023).

Defining the concept of luxury has proven to be a particularly challenging endeavor (Holmqvist et al., 2020b). One fundamental assumption is that luxury is typically linked to the pursuit of pleasure and positive experiences, including emotional experiences (Gummerus et al., 2023). However, recent research indicates that luxury can manifest in various forms, including the pursuit of discomfort or challenges as a way to break free from routine (Scott et al., 2017). Additionally, luxury increasingly encompasses immersive, escape-oriented experiences, reflecting the idea that it extends beyond material possessions to include transformative experiences that offer temporary respite from daily life (Holmqvist et al., 2020a; von Wallpach et al., 2020).

In the literature, it is observed that the conceptualization of luxury creation revolves around three distinct dimensions: (a) offering characteristics, which involve factors like price and quality; (b) luxury strategy, focused on restricted availability through exclusivity, selectivity,

and scarcity; and (c) the value proposition, emphasizing elements of distinction related to social status and heritage (Gummerus et al., 2023).

The attributes of luxury products and services are typically defined by factors such as their high price, exceptional quality, superior craftsmanship, innovative design, and artistic creativity (Cristini et al., 2017; Ko et al., 2016; Wang, 2022). Brand managers often promote these attributes as the key selling points of luxury items (Wang, 2022). Beyond the satisfaction of owning expensive possessions, these attributes also offer significant psychological benefits, including enhanced self-esteem, increased prestige, and a heightened sense of social status. As a result, luxury products serve as subtle indicators, both to the consumer and to observers, of their belonging to an exclusive and privileged group capable of affording these high-end goods (Rajan et al., 2019).

The literature underscores the pivotal significance of controlled availability, exclusivity, and scarcity as fundamental components within the framework of luxury strategy (Kapferer, 2012; Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2018). The control over the accessibility of these premium products is executed with precision, frequently entailing a meticulous oversight of the supply chain, and typically involving the strategic implementation of selective distribution (Liu et al., 2019). Moreover, growth is attained by raising prices, deliberately restricting product availability, and employing tactics such as timing considerations and limited editions, all of which collectively bolster the aura of exclusivity (Kapferer, 2012, 2014). The price may not necessarily be prominently displayed since it is not required to be a rational consideration for potential buyers. Instead, the price represents the cost of intangible aspects, such as the product's history, its legendary status, and the brand's prestige (Kapferer, 2014).

The value proposition of distinction and heritage stands as a distinctive element within luxury offerings. Existing research emphasizes that consumption of luxury goods is motivated by the desire to conspicuously display one's social status since luxury products serve to convey power, wealth, and influence on others (Gummerus et al., 2023). Indeed, a study on the perceived post-purchase risks indicated that consumers, when opting for luxury services versus non-luxury alternatives, tend to prioritize how these choices affect their self-image and social status over concerns about the service's functional performance (Chang & Ko, 2017).

However, the assessment of whether a brand attains luxury status fundamentally hinges on consumer perceptions of that brand. While some management methods, like premium pricing or exceptional quality, can enhance the likelihood of a brand being perceived as luxurious, such actions alone do not categorize it as a luxury brand unless consumers hold that perception (Ko et al., 2019).

1.2. Aging and beauty perception

Throughout history, people have consistently desired attractive possessions, yet the global aspiration for enhanced personal appearance is reaching unprecedented levels (Madan et al., 2018). This pursuit of beauty and the desire to look good is not only a trend among younger generations but has also persisted among older individuals over the years (Clarke & Griffin, 2008).

Worldwide, the extension of lifespans is driving a swift acceleration in population aging. According to the United Nations, an older adult is defined as an individual aged at least 60 years old (United Nations, 2019). By 2030, an estimated 1 in 6 individuals globally will be aged 60 or over. Projections indicate that the population aged 60 years and older will increase from 1 billion in 2020 to 1.4 billion by 2030. Notably, this trend is expected to persist, with the world's population aged 60 and older projected to double to 2.1 billion by 2050 (World Health Organization [WHO], 2022b).

A longer life brings ample opportunities, especially the chance to explore new activities and make meaningful contributions. Tiago et al. (2016) have shown a positive correlation between enhanced health and increased income, leading to greater participation in grey tourism. This is facilitated by individuals having the financial capacity to travel, especially with grown children and without the burden of house payments (Fleischer & Pizam, 2002). Moreover, some of the motivations for travel include a focus on wellness, spa experiences, and health treatments (Tiago et al., 2016).

However, health is key to realizing these opportunities (WHO, 2022b). In the realm of healthy aging, mental health takes center stage, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping the quality of extended years (von Humboldt et al., 2022; WHO, 2023). The concept of self-esteem, encompassing feelings of self-acceptance and respect, is intricately linked to an individual's mental health and is influenced by personal beliefs about skills, abilities, and social relationships (Shah et al., 2023). This perception of oneself plays a crucial role in shaping overall mental well-being, contributing to one's ability to cope with life's stresses and engage productively within their community (Henriksen et al., 2017; WHO, 2022a).

The marketing of cosmetic products and fashion exerts a considerable impact on how individuals perceive and evaluate themselves, with a historical tendency to promote unrealistic beauty standards (Craddock et al., 2019). Social media has also amplified this effect, as it has become a platform where beauty standards are set and often contributes to body dissatisfaction and self-esteem issues among its users (Henriques & Patnaik, 2021). However, there is a

growing shift within these industries towards initiatives that encourage positive body image and challenge traditional norms (Craddock et al., 2019).

Moreover, the decision to use these products is significantly shaped by external factors such as the social influence of peers, family, and media, with the most prevalent motivation being the aspiration to attain a fairer, more beautiful, and attractive appearance (Shroff et al., 2018). Women, in particular, often begin this quest during their first interactions with beauty products, which signify their initiation into femininity and the development of their feminine identity (Cash et al., 1985), a journey that extends into old age, underscoring the ongoing importance of preserving this aspect for their psychological well-being (Romana et al., 2019).

The process of aging is an inherent and universal aspect of life, with each individual experiencing this phase at their unique timing and pace. Aging is commonly described as a natural biological transformation over time, encompassing a broad spectrum of physical changes, such as hair turning grey, the development of wrinkles, and a notable decline in physical capabilities (Amarya et al., 2018). The aging female body is commonly stigmatized, perceived as unattractive, useless, dysfunctional, and asexual, reflecting prevailing societal notions of ugliness, poor health, and weakness associated with the signs of aging (Chung, 2020).

The global spotlight is increasingly focusing on women's pursuit of beauty and the desire to enhance their appearance (Madan et al., 2018). Older women indicated that their involvement in beauty-related activities stemmed from various underlying motivations, including a lifelong commitment to appearance maintenance, the aspiration to attract or maintain a romantic partner, combating invisibility, and addressing age-related biases in employment (Clarke & Griffin, 2008). Moreover, employing makeup to alter their appearance, women aim to project a more youthful and attractive image (Mafra et al., 2020).

1.3. Self-esteem in old age

Self-esteem reflects an individual's comprehensive assessment of their self-value, encompassing their beliefs about their competencies, accomplishments, worth, and significance (Peer, 1982; Rosenberg, 1965). People are motivated to employ various strategies to attain and uphold high self-esteem (Hepper, 2023). Wang et al.’s research (2014) indicated that individuals with higher self-esteem generally maintain a positive self-image and are more welcoming and less concerned about external judgments. Consequently, their consumption patterns tend to be more self-directed and less influenced by external evaluations. In contrast, individuals with lower self-esteem often harbor unfavorable self-perceptions and frequently

grapple with negative emotions like anxiety, fear, self-doubt, and insecurity. Consequently, they tend to adapt their behaviors and choices in response to their surroundings and the judgments of others (Wang et al., 2014).

Moreover, studies have consistently highlighted a positive correlation between how women perceive their attractiveness and the degree of self-esteem they experience (Mafra et al., 2022; Mafra & Lopes, 2014). Self-esteem, vital for assessing self-worth, is crucial across life stages, particularly in older individuals (Alaphilippe, 2008), serving as an indicator of mental health, adaptability, and mature personality (Šare et al., 2021). As indicated by Wagner et al. (2014), a substantial decline in self-esteem occurs when individuals become acutely aware of their aging. This negative correlation between self-esteem and aging perceptions, especially chronic perceptions involving a constant awareness of age and negative emotional responses to aging, as highlighted by Evangelista et al. (2022a), suggests that such prolonged awareness contributes to adverse experiences of aging, ultimately leading to diminished self-esteem and well-being.

The interplay of various dimensions, including self-esteem, perceived health status, and negative perceptions of aging emerges as intricately linked to psychological distress. Notably, self-esteem manifests as a robust and positive predictor of SWB (Baumeister et al., 2003; Carver & Buchanan, 2016). Additionally, it exhibits a negative correlation with other indicators of mental health and well-being, including states of depression and anxiety, underscoring its role in mitigating feelings of poor personal worth (Carver & Buchanan, 2016). This intricate relationship suggests that psychological distress may serve as a mediator for the impact of these dimensions on overall well-being (Ingrand et al., 2018).

1.4. Subjective well-being and quality of life in old age

SWB is a highly active field of study, with a focus on assessing an individual's perception of the overall quality of life, as indicated by the term itself (Diener, 1984; Diener et al., 2018). The concept of SWB encompasses a cognitive component, represented by life satisfaction, and an affective component, which includes both positive and negative emotional experiences (Tay & Diener, 2011). A high SWB is marked by frequent pleasant emotions and infrequent unpleasant emotions and a positive judgement about life a whole (Diener et al., 2006). The term "subjective" is crucial in shaping the construct, emphasizing that SWB researchers specifically explore evaluations of life quality from the individual's standpoint. Moreover, higher SWB has been associated with good health and overall happiness (Diener et al., 2018).

Although the concept of QoL continues to evolve, it is commonly understood as embracing a wide spectrum of human experiences associated with well-being at a certain point in life

(Revicki et al., 2000). Key dimensions of QoL encompass personal well-being in terms of physical, mental, and spiritual health, as well as factors like social connectedness, work environment, relationships, financial prosperity, decision-making autonomy, freedom, social status, and quality of one's physical surroundings (Teoli & Bhardwaj, 2023).

Moreover, the aging journey entails a spectrum of physical, physiological, and psychological changes that may impede an individual's daily functioning, leading to a potential decline in their overall QoL and SWB. As life expectancy continues to rise, prioritizing the maintenance of a satisfactory QoL emerges as a central objective in providing care for older adults, particularly those facing frailty (Netuveli & Blane, 2008).

SWB and QoL are fundamental terms that describe experience, abilities, moods, behaviors, assessments, and emotional reactions to situations (Skevington & Böhnke, 2018). Thus, it was also found that self-esteem is positively associated with SWB and is inversely related to anxiety and depression, underscoring the role of self-esteem in individuals' overall psychological health (Ingrand et al., 2018). While self-esteem has been traditionally believed to influence various life aspects, the evidence is mixed, affecting factors like overall well-being, interpersonal relationships, and certain psychological issues (Hepper, 2023). Self-esteem and QoL are closely interconnected, reflecting individuals' subjective perceptions of themselves and their lives. Consequently, low self-esteem tends to correlate with lower QoL scores (Ingrand et al., 2018; Machado et al., 2023). Additionally, consumption choices affect how people perceive their life satisfaction and general happiness (Sirgy, 2021), which in turn influences their QoL (Gupta et al., 2024).

The SWB of older adults is closely related to their QoL, suggesting that enhancing SWB requires consideration of diverse factors (Liu et al., 2023). Beyond health, other lifestyle factors also impact SWB (Lampropoulou, 2018). Additionally, research has identified personality (Abdullahi et al., 2020), culture (Yamaguchi & Kim, 2015), economic factors (Zhou et al., 2015), and interpersonal interactions (Nikitin & Freund, 2021), as influential in shaping the level of SWB. Notably, these factors are inherently connected to overall QoL for older adults (López-Ruiz et al., 2021).

1.5. Luxury cosmetics and self-esteem

Luxury transcends its material aspects, offering various forms of value, including prudential value, encompassing the sense of well-being, happiness, or personal satisfaction that individuals derive from luxury experiences (Kauppinen-Räisänen et al., 2019). Luxury can also

act as a catalyst for personal transformation and the reconstruction of one's self-identity (Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2019). Additionally, consumers' interactions with luxury encompass a spectrum of positive aspects, such as personal growth, happiness, a sense of connection with others, and moments of self-transcendence (von Wallpach et al., 2020).

The impact of makeup on self-esteem can vary based on internal or external motivations (Truong & McColl, 2011). When makeup is seen as a means of self-expression, mastery, empowerment, or connecting with others, it can more directly affect self-esteem. On the other hand, when people use makeup to avoid guilt, boost their ego, or gain confidence in social situations, it may indirectly help maintain or elevate their self-esteem. Some individuals use makeup as a means of enhancing their self-esteem, often by seeking compliments or increasing self-assurance through this form of ego involvement (Tran et al., 2020). Makeup has consistently showcased its capacity to serve as a holistic tool for enhancing mood, improving self-image, and regulating emotions, surpassing its superficial role as a cosmetic product (Kawakubo & Oguchi, 2023).

While research on luxury cosmetics and self-esteem remains relatively underexplored, it is noteworthy that the psychological effects of cosmetics include raising self-esteem and satisfaction, all of which have a favorable impact on people's mental health (Henriksen et al., 2017; Tran et al., 2020). For instance, a recent study involving women demonstrated that professionally applied makeup enhanced their self-perception, making them feel more feminine, attractive, satisfied with their appearance, and with increased self-esteem (Anchieta et al., 2021), which in turn had the potential to contribute positively to their QoL (Machado et al., 2023). On the male front, while limited research exists on the use of cosmetic products or treatments, it is acknowledged that improvements in appearance can also contribute to self-esteem and subsequently contribute to an enhanced QoL (Machado et al., 2023). Furthermore, the application of facial firming products and sunscreen has been linked to improved QoL (Evangelista et al., 2022b).

Prior research has also underscored a significant positive correlation between body image and self-esteem (Olchowska-Kotala, 2018). Unfavorable body image has been connected to a range of adverse mental health outcomes, including low self-esteem, depression, and eating disorders (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2022; Kapoor et al., 2022). Notably, feeling dissatisfied with body image emphasizes the relationship between body dissatisfaction and mental well-being (Moehlecke et al., 2020). Additionally, a study by Richard et al. (2019) revealed that patients with early-stage breast cancer who participated in a single-session group makeup workshop reported reduced depressive symptoms, enhanced QoL, and heightened self-esteem.

Furthermore, the dynamics of self-esteem, social exclusion, and consumer behavior are also intricately connected, as social exclusion can pose a threat to an individual's self-esteem. When people experience rejection or exclusion, they often experience a heightened desire to belong to a social group (Chen et al., 2017). To preserve their self-esteem and sense of belonging, individuals are motivated to engage in behaviors that align with the expectations of their reference group (Lee et al., 2017). Additionally, Oh's study (2021) indicated that individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a higher social class may resort to conspicuous consumption when their social self-esteem is low. In essence, this implies that individuals in higher social strata, who experience a dip in social self-esteem, may be more inclined to engage in extravagant consumption as a means of compensating for their perceived social status, potentially to gain approval or recognition within their social circle (Oh, 2021).

Despite this negative link between self-esteem and conspicuous consumption, individuals with higher incomes typically exhibit higher self-esteem, implying that individuals in lower social strata might be especially inclined to engage in conspicuous consumption to enhance their perceived social status (Bleidorn et al., 2023). Moreover, individuals exhibiting vulnerable narcissism often grapple with low self-esteem and a negative self-concept (Fastoso et al., 2018) and seek social approval (Neave et al., 2020). In this context, individuals are motivated to participate in conspicuous consumption for a twofold reason. First, they turn to conspicuous consumption as a method to alleviate their negative self-concept, seeking to boost their self-esteem and self-worth by acquiring and prominently showcasing high-end possessions (Fastoso et al., 2018). Secondly, the quest for social approval is a central driver of their conspicuous consumption behaviors, as they strive to elevate their social status and secure validation and recognition from their social circle through the exhibition of luxury items (Neave et al., 2020).

1.6. Consumer behavior in the luxury cosmetics industry

Consumer behavior involves a complex set of actions encompassing product selection, purchase, usage, and disposal, all aimed at satisfying their needs and desires (Solomon, 2020). In today's context, consumers are no longer satisfied with mere transactions as they seek deeper and more meaningful connections with brands. The study of consumer behavior plays a vital role in crafting successful marketing strategies, enhancing business performance, shaping public policies, improving consumer SWB, and contributing to academic progress (Šostar & Ristanović, 2023).

Consumer preferences are shaped by a multitude of factors, such as age, gender, socio-economic status, life stage, personality, and lifestyle (Cao et al., 2018). People of the same age often share common values and cultural experiences, which influence their choices over time. Gender, especially in the beauty industry, has changed, with men increasingly engaging with makeup. Brands that provide diverse sensory and emotional experiences can form unique and personal connections with consumers, a trend notably prominent in luxury brands (Gupta et al., 2023). Moreover, factors like social class and income play significant roles in determining consumer spending patterns, often guided by family structure and social class (Šostar & Ristanović, 2023).

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954), a well-established motivation theory, plays a crucial role in understanding consumer behavior (Rojas et al., 2023). This theory categorizes human needs into a pyramid, beginning with physiological needs at the base and progressing to safety, belonging and love, esteem, and self-actualization needs as individuals ascend the hierarchy (Maslow, 1954). The luxury cosmetics industry can contribute to addressing various levels of human motivation and fulfillment. Luxury products, with their premium quality and exclusivity, often cater to individuals' esteem needs by enhancing their self-esteem and social status (Giovannini et al., 2015; Loureiro et al., 2020). Consumers are intrinsically motivated to ascend the hierarchy, with luxury needs progressively aligning with the pinnacle of self-actualization desires. This contemporary dimension of luxury transcends the material realm, emphasizing personal and experiential aspects over mere possessions (Loureiro et al., 2020). Notably, the utilization of luxury cosmetics can foster self-actualization, providing an avenue for self-expression and individual style, culminating in personal growth and self-fulfillment (Tran et al., 2020; von Wallpach et al., 2020).

Makeup choices are influenced by factors like self-esteem, where women with lower self-esteem may use more makeup to conceal imperfections, while those with higher self-esteem might use it to draw attention (Mafra et al., 2022). Interestingly, New Seniors demonstrate a unique perspective, exhibiting a generational bias against makeup in old age. Their makeup usage is motivated by a desire to look younger, with a distinct need for tailored products that are easy to use and produce noticeable effects (Baek, 2020).

As individuals age, noticeable signs of aging become apparent on the skin. Consequently, many individuals, particularly women, allocate a significant portion of their daily expenses to cosmetics and pharmaceuticals every day to try to stop or reverse these aging effects on the skin (Kazanci et al., 2017). Additionally, luxury cosmetics, known for their superior quality, can be

used on sensitive skin with special needs, enhancing self-esteem across generations while also symbolizing high social status (Li et al., 2022; Xi et al., 2022).

Moreover, the quest for self-directed pleasure strongly influences self-esteem, and indulgence in luxury products as a form of self-reward effectively satisfies individuals' self-esteem needs (Truong & McColl, 2011). In today's consumer landscape, individuals often treat themselves to luxury cosmetic brands, enhancing their SWB and self-worth. This practice of self-indulgence goes beyond the mere choice of brands and encompasses the *what* and *how* of consumer purchases, serving as a means of self-expression and a statement of their wants and needs (Rajan et al., 2019).

While research on luxury cosmetics has been growing, the prevailing body of literature has predominantly concentrated on non-luxury cosmetics within the broader cosmetic industry. Additionally, within the niche of luxury cosmetics, research specific to older demographics is scarce. The scarcity of research on luxury cosmetics becomes even more pronounced when considering its influence on self-esteem in the context of aging. Existing studies have explored the relationship between cosmetics and self-esteem (e.g. Anchieta et al., 2021; Evangelista et al., 2022a; Mafra et al., 2022) and in old age (Nagae et al., 2023; Wu & Chao, 2023), yet the intersection of luxury cosmetics and its distinct effects on self-esteem among older adults remains a relatively uncharted area. In this context, the aim of this study was to contribute valuable insights to the field by exploring the nuanced impact of luxury cosmetics on the self-esteem of older adults. The two primary objectives of this study were to: (1) Investigate the influence of luxury cosmetics usage on older adults' self-esteem, SWB, and QoL; and (2) Identify groups of older individuals with similar usage behavior of luxury cosmetics and examine whether these groups differ in terms of self-esteem, SWB, QoL, or their sociodemographic characteristics. This study not only aimed to expand our understanding of the relationship between luxury cosmetics and self-esteem in older adults but also intended to shed light on its implications for overall well-being in this demographic.

CHAPTER 2

Methodology

2.1. Study design

This quantitative study utilized a correlational design to investigate the association between older individuals' use of luxury cosmetics and specific psychological well-being variables. Regression analysis was utilized to assess if the usage of luxury cosmetics affected older individuals' self-esteem, SWB, and QoL.

Furthermore, an exploratory approach was taken to identify groups of older individuals who shared a similar consumption pattern for luxury cosmetics and to compare these groups in terms of self-esteem, SWB, QoL, or sociodemographic. Cluster analysis was used to identify different groupings of older individuals based on their use of luxury cosmetics. This technique was used since it allows to categorize individuals into distinct groups based on shared characteristics, enabling a detailed examination of consumption patterns (Marôco, 2021). By using cluster analysis, the study can provide more nuanced insights into how different segments of the older population interact with luxury cosmetics and how these interactions relate to their self-esteem, SWB, QoL, and sociodemographic profiles.

2.2. Participants

The study focused on luxury consumption and older persons, hence purposeful sampling (Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022) was used to target those who use luxury cosmetics and were 60 years of age or older, according to the United Nations (2019) definition of an older adult. Using this strategy allowed for the selection of individuals who fit the necessary criteria to investigate the effects of luxury cosmetic use on older people's SWB, QoL, and self-esteem.

Additionally, convenience sampling was used to provide more accessibility and outreach to eligible participants (Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022). The link to the online questionnaire was distributed through social platforms (such as Facebook, WhatsApp and senior forums). Furthermore, recruiting chances among people who would not have been reached through internet means were made possible by engaging them in premium retail settings where luxury cosmetics are offered. Participants were informed of the study's aims. All participants were informed that they might withdraw from the survey at any moment and that it was completely voluntary. The data's anonymity and confidentiality were ensured. The period of data collection was between February 22 and May 3, 2024.

Participants aged 60 years and older and varying frequency of usage of luxury cosmetics were included in the inclusion criteria. Luxury cosmetics were defined according to Gummerus et al. (2023) as goods with premium characteristics such as higher price, high-quality components, exclusivity, and a value proposition focused on social status. This criteria adoption was done to improve the study's validity and relevance to the research's goals by ensuring uniformity in the identification of participants who interact with luxury cosmetic companies.

The final sample included 312 individuals (M = 67.9; SD = 6.5), ranging in age from 60 years to 97, with women constituting 83% of the total sample. The sample reflected a well-educated demographic, with only 24% having educational attainment below secondary level, while the majority had a secondary education (39.1%) or higher (36.9%). The marital status distribution showed that a significant portion were married or *in de facto* unions (66.3%) and a notable proportion were retired (64.1%). Financially, the sample was balanced, with 47.8% reporting a family income of more than 40,000€ annually and 52.2% earning less. Health perceptions were generally positive, with 91.0% describing their health as good. Leisure engagement was prevalent, with 69.9% participating in leisure activities. Overall, this sample represented a well-educated, financially diverse, and predominantly retired population with a positive outlook on health and active lifestyle participation. Table 2.1 presents the sociodemographic, health and lifestyle characteristics of the participants.

Table 2.1 Sociodemographic, health and lifestyle characteristics of the participants

Characteristics	**Total, *n***	**Total, %**
	312	100%
Average Age ± *SD*	M = 67.9 ± 6.5	
Age		
60-69 years old	239	76.6%
70-79 years old	55	17.6%
80+ years old	18	5.8%
Gender		
Female	259	83.0%
Male	53	17.0%
Educational level		
< Secondary	75	24.0%
Secondary	122	39.1%
> Secondary	115	36.9%

Marital status		
Single	24	7.7%
Married/*de facto* union	207	66.4%
Divorced/separated	50	16.0%
Widow	31	9.9%
Household		
Living alone	46	14.7%
Living with someone	266	85.3%
Family Annual Income		
≤ 40,000 €	163	52.2%
> 40,000 €	149	47.8%
Retirement status		
Retired	200	64.1%
Not retired	112	35.9%
Perceived health		
Good	284	91.0%
Poor	28	9.0%
Engagement in leisure activities		
Yes	218	69.9%
No	94	30.1%

Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

2.3. Material

In this study, three key variables were explored, namely self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, assessed using validated scales derived from the literature (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2 Key variables and corresponding scales

Variable	Scale	Author	Portuguese version	No. of items	Likert-type
Self-esteem	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)	Rosenberg (1965)	Pechorro et al. (2011)	10	7-point
Subjective well-being (SWB)	Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)	Watson et al. (1988)	Galinha & Ribeiro (2005)	20	7-point
	Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	Diener et al. (1985)	Figueiras et al. (2010)	5	7-point
Quality of life (QoL)	Quality of Life Scale (QOLS)	Flanagan (1978)	Santos et al. (2002)	16	7-point

Source: Author's own elaboration

2.3.1. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), created by Rosenberg (1965) is a tool designed to assess overall self-esteem. It comprises 10 items, including five positive statements (e.g., "I am currently satisfied with myself") and five negative ones (e.g., "I feel I do not have much to be proud of"). Respondents expressed their agreement on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (s*trongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Higher scores on the scale indicate higher levels of self-esteem. The Portuguese version of the Pechorro et al. (2011) was utilized in this study. Our analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.94, indicating a high internal consistency. The original scale was demonstrated to be valid and displayed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.92.

2.3.2. Subjective well-being scales

SWB comprises both affective (experiences emotions) and cognitive (life satisfaction) components. While these components are frequently interconnected, they are also linked to distinct outcomes (Tay & Diener, 2011). Therefore, an ideal evaluation of SWB needs a separate measurement of each component (Pavot, 2008). To appraise the affective aspect, the study employed the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988), and to assess the cognitive component, the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) was used.

2.3.2.1. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

The Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson et al., 1988) consists of 20 items distributed across two subscales: one assessing positive affect (e.g., Excited) and the other evaluating negative affect (e.g., Afraid). Participants rated their responses on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*) (Watson et al., 1988). The Portuguese version of the scale utilized in this study was adapted from Galinha & Ribeiro (2005). The scale has demonstrated validity and exhibits very good internal consistency reliability (Heubeck & Wilkinson, 2019), and in this analysis, Cronbach’s alpha for the positive subscale was 0.89 and for the negative subscale was 0.86.

2.3.2.2. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985) is a 5-item Likert-type scale, with sample items, such as "I am satisfied with life," rated on a scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The Portuguese scale used in this study was sourced from Figueiras et al.

(2010). The scale has been demonstrated to be valid with a very good internal consistency (Diener et al., 1985), demonstrating a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 in this analysis.

2.3.3. Quality of Life Scale (QOLS)

Developed by Flanagan (1978), the Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) is a 16-item tool designed to assess five distinct conceptual domains of QoL: (1) material and physical well-being (e.g., material comforts); (2) relationships with other people (e.g., relationships with spouse or significant other); (3) social, community and civic activities (e.g., participating in organizations and public affairs); (4) personal development and fulfillment (e.g., learning); and (5) recreation (e.g., participating in active recreation). Extensive testing has been conducted to establish the reliability, content, and construct validity of the QOLS, and the translated version from Santos et al. (2002) was used. Respondents used a 7-point scale, with corresponding responses ranging from (1) "*terrible*" to (7) "*delighted*" (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003). Cronbach's alpha for the scale in this study demonstrated good reliability (0.90).

2.3.4. Sociodemographic, health, lifestyle, and engagement with luxury cosmetics questionnaire

Key sociodemographic details of the participants were analyzed, including age, biologic sex, education level, marital status, household, family annual income, and retirement status. Additionally, participants were also asked about their perceived health and engagement in leisure activities during their free time. Moreover, participants were queried about their engagement with luxury cosmetics, including frequency of purchase, the number of luxury cosmetics products owned, duration of usage, and average monthly expenditure on luxury cosmetics.

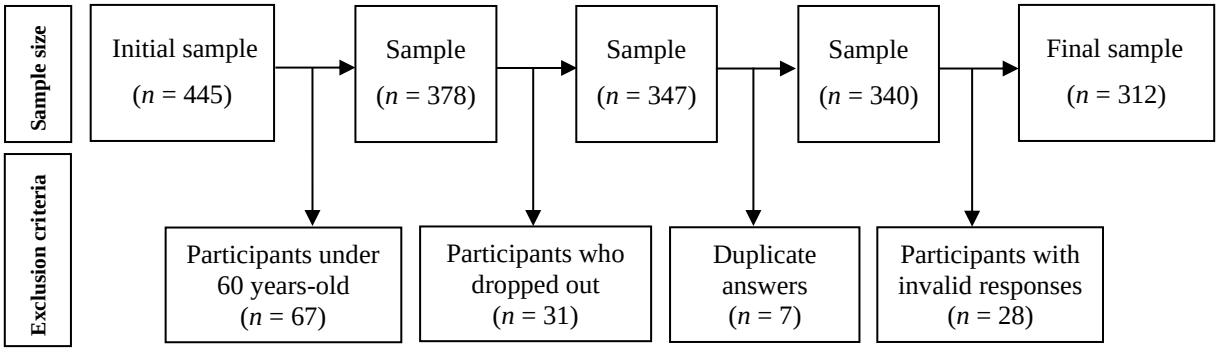
Access the final survey in Annex A.

2.4. Procedure

2.4.1. Data cleaning

Data cleaning is a complex process that removes or modifies data that is inaccurate, incomplete, irrelevant, duplicated, or poorly structured to improve the quality of the cleaned data and make it ready for analysis (Ridzuan & Wan Zainon, 2019). The study's original sample comprised 445 individuals who were recruited for the study. Following careful data cleansing processes, 67 individuals who were younger than 60 years old were removed from the analysis, guaranteeing compliance with the age-specific criteria of the study. To ensure data integrity, 31

individuals who had left the research before it was finished were also eliminated. Additionally, 7 duplicated items were found and removed after more examination. Moreover, it was found that 28 individuals gave identical answers to every question, which led to their removal to maintain the validity of the study's findings. A final sample of 312 older individuals was obtained (see Figure 2.1).



Source: Author's own elaboration

Figure 2.1 Data cleaning process and sample reduction

Out-of-range values were also addressed. Outliers, or data that falls outside of the groups, occur in practically every experiment and frequently have negative effects on results (Emborg, 2023). Following Hoaglin and Iglewicz (1987), an outlier analysis was conducted, and the 1% winsorization process, involving altering the weights of the outliers or substituting predicted values for the data being examined for outliers was employed (Kwak & Kim, 2017). This approach minimizes alterations to the dataset while effectively reducing the potential influence of extreme values, thereby ensuring that the analysis maintains the integrity of the original data, including critical extreme values pertinent to this study. Missing values analysis was also performed, and the series means approach was used, which consists of replacing missing values with the mean for the whole series (IBM Corporation, 2021). After data cleaning, reverse coding was employed on the necessary items.

2.4.2. Statistical analysis

Data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (version 29). The study examined the relationships between luxury cosmetics usage as the independent variable and three dependent variables: "Mean_SelfEsteem," "Mean_SWB," and "Mean_QoL," each representing the means scores from relevant scales. Four independent variables were assessed: frequency of purchasing luxury cosmetics (PurchaseFrequencyLC), number of owned luxury cosmetics products

(ProductsOwnedLC), duration of luxury cosmetics use (TimeUsedLC), and average monthly expenditure on luxury cosmetics (MonthlySpendLC).

To address the first research question, which examines the influence of luxury cosmetics usage on the self-esteem, SWB, and QoL of older adults, regression analysis was required. Before this and given the considerations of multicollinearity and variable relevance, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was utilized to reduce to only one independent variable, named "LC_Usage", which encompasses the usage of luxury cosmetics. Researchers use this method to uncover hidden patterns and relationships among observed variables, making it easier to understand the data's connections. By distilling complex data into fewer meaningful factors, EFA captures the shared variance among measured variables, providing insights into the data's underlying structure without preconceived hypotheses (Watkins, 2018). This method was chosen to create composite factors that could serve as more reliable predictors in later regression models, enhancing the findings' interpretability and robustness. This was also confirmed by the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test.

For the first study's goal, three separate simple regression analyses were employed to examine if luxury cosmetics usage influenced self-esteem, SWB, and QoL of older adults. Regarding the second goal, K-means cluster analysis was carried out to identify patterns and relationships among participants based on their responses. The respondents were divided into different groups using cluster analysis based on their scores in luxury cosmetics usage and self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. This method allowed to create clear clusters that reflect similarities in how they use cosmetics, helping to explore differences in their self-esteem, SWB, QoL, and sociodemographic characteristics. The *F* statistics of the clusters ANOVA were used to determine the significance of each variable in each of the clusters, by the methods described in Marôco (2021). The study employed Chi-square analysis to examine the differences between group individuals concerning sociodemographic, health, and lifestyle characteristics. In every analysis, $p < 0.05$ was the requirement for statistical significance. Descriptive statistics were performed to provide an overview of the sample for each cluster.

CHAPTER 3

Results

Before the regression analysis, the correlations among variables were evaluated (see Table 3.1). It was observed that all independent variables exhibited high intercorrelations ($r > 0.8$), indicating multicollinearity. Additionally, a relevancy check was conducted, assessing the correlations between each dependent variable and the independent variables, and serving minor differences in these correlations. All variables showed significant correlations at the 0.01 alpha level. Therefore, before conducting the regression analysis, it was essential to reduce the number of underlying dimensions to mitigate the effects of multicollinearity among the independent variables.

Table 3.1 Correlations between independent and dependent variables

		Independent Variables			
		PurchaseFrequencyLC	ProductsOwnedLC	TimeUsedLC	MonthlySpendLC
Independent variables	PurchaseFrequencyLC	1	.834*	.813*	.858*
	ProductsOwnedLC		1	.843*	.828*
	TimeUsedLC			1	.825*
	MonthlySpendLC				1
Dependent variables	Mean_SelfEsteem	.557*	.500*	.486*	.568*
	Mean_SWB	.596*	.534*	.509*	.595*
	Mean_QoL	.544*	.498*	.502*	.555*

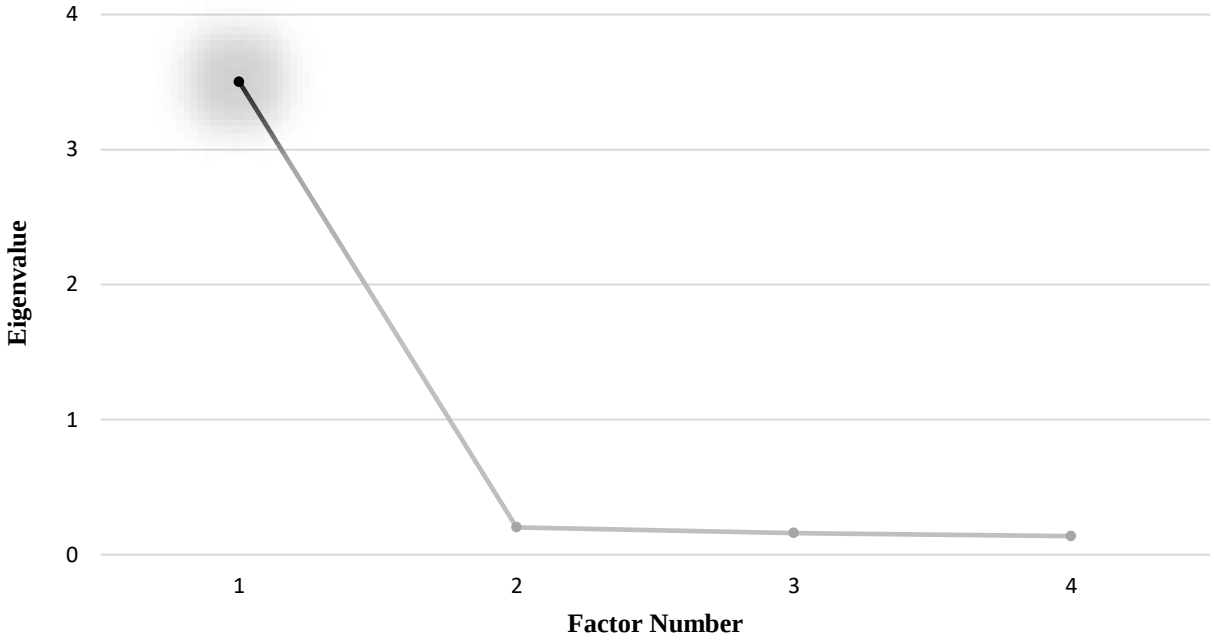
* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

3.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

A statistical method, EFA, that simplifies complex datasets by identifying and reducing the number of underlying dimensions, was used in this study. To ensure the data was suitable for this factor analysis, it was used the KMO measure and Bartlett's test. The KMO value came out to be 0.867, which means the sample size is adequate and the variable correlations were strong enough for EFA. Additionally, Bartlett's test showed significant results ($\chi^2 = 1287.132$, $p < 0.001$), indicating substantial correlations among the variables. These two tests together confirmed that the dataset was appropriate for EFA.

Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) was utilized in EFA to find the underlying components that accounted for the observed variable correlation patterns. Based on the study, 83.4% of the variation was explained by the first factor. The first factor seemed to capture much of the variation in the dataset, while the contributions from the other factors were significantly less. Additionally, the scree plot also suggested that just one factor be kept (see Figure 3.1).



Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

Figure 3.1 Scree Plot

The Factor Matrix shows the strength of the relationships between the observed variables and the underlying factor. It revealed high loadings for all items, indicating that these variables are strongly associated with the factor. It suggested that the single factor represented the overall usage and engagement with luxury cosmetics, capturing the frequency, quantity, duration, and financial investment associated with these products (see Table 3.2). This variable was named "LC_Usage".

The Factor Score Coefficient Matrix shows the contribution of each variable to the factor score. These coefficients were relatively evenly distributed, with spending on luxury cosmetics contributing the most to the factor score, while the duration of usage contributing the least (see Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Factor Matrix and Factor Score Coefficient Matrix

	Factor Matrix	Factor Score Coefficient Matrix
How often do you purchase luxury cosmetics?	.916	.264
How many luxury cosmetics products do you currently own?	.915	.270
How long have you been using luxury cosmetics?	.902	.229
On average, how much do you spend on luxury cosmetics per month?	.919	.279

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

3.2. Impact of luxury cosmetics on self-esteem, SWB, and QoL

Regarding the first goal, the findings of the first simple regression analysis revealed that the luxury cosmetics usage, the independent variable, explained 32.0% of the variation in older persons' self-esteem (R^2 =.320). The regression model was statistically significant (F (1, 310) = 145.946, $p < 0.001$), demonstrating that the model adequately predicted self-esteem. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for the use of luxury cosmetics was .811, which means that, all other variables being constant, self-esteem increased by .811 units for every unit increase in the use of luxury cosmetics. The consumption of luxury cosmetics and self-esteem had a moderate positive correlation, as indicated by the standardized coefficient (β) of .566. As the related p-value was less than 0.001 and the t-value was 12.081, it was confirmed that the predictor was statistically significant.

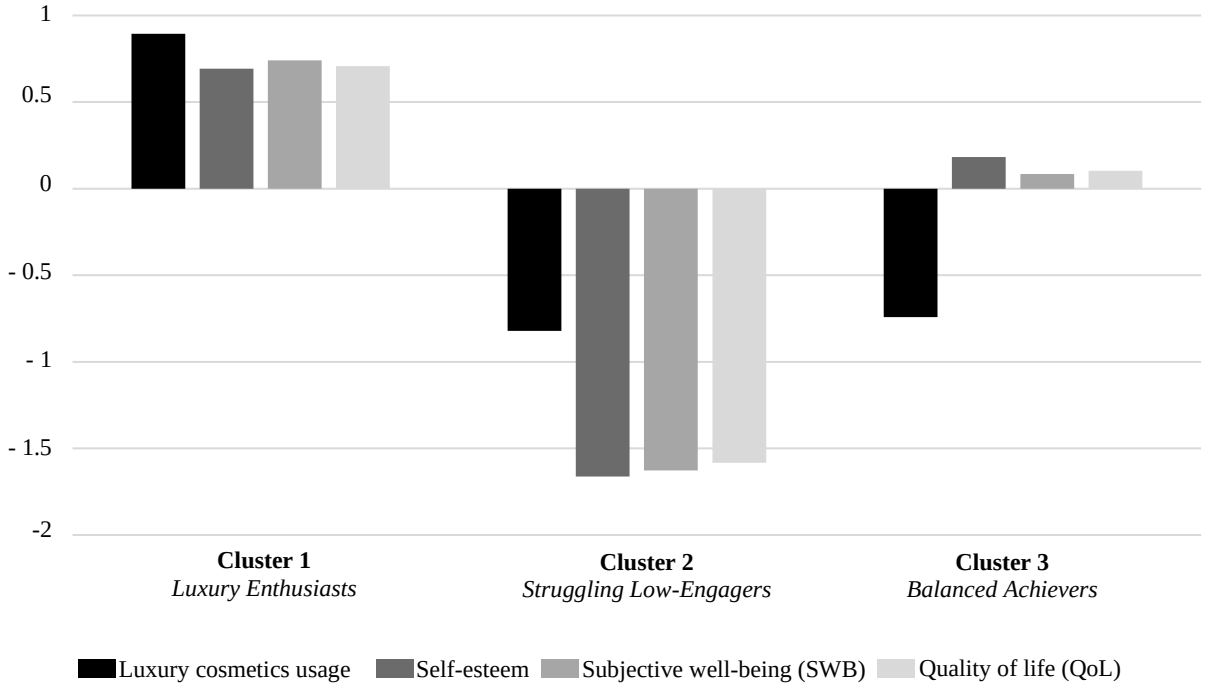
According to the second simple regression analysis, the use of luxury cosmetics accounted for 35.8% of the variation in older individuals' SWB (R^2 =.358). The regression model showed significant results (F (1, 310) = 173.196, $p < 0.001$), indicating that SWB was predicted by the model. The consumption of luxury cosmetics had an unstandardized coefficient (B) of .825, which indicated that, assuming other factors remain constant, a one-unit increase in the use of luxury cosmetics resulted in an .825-unit enhanced SWB. The use of luxury cosmetics and SWB appeared to be moderately positively correlated, as indicated by the standardized coefficient (β) of .599. The obtained p-value was less than 0.001, and the t-value was 13.160, also confirming the predictor's statistical significance.

The last simple regression analysis results indicated that the use of luxury cosmetics accounted for 31.5% of the variation in older individuals' QoL (R^2 =.315). The regression model was statistically significant (F (1, 310) = 142.843, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that QoL was predicted by the model. The consumption of luxury cosmetics had an unstandardized coefficient

(*B*) of .737, meaning that, holding other factors constant, an increase in luxury cosmetics usage of one unit corresponded to an improvement in QoL of .737 units. The QoL and the luxury cosmetics usage were also moderately positively correlated, as indicated by the standardized coefficient (β) of .562. The *t*-value was 11.952, and the *p*-value was less than 0.001, indicating that the predictor was statistically significant.

3.3. Cluster analysis of luxury cosmetics usage and self-esteem, SWB and QoL

Concerning the second goal, by focusing on participants' scores of luxury cosmetics usage, self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, three distinct clusters were created, accounting for 72.5% of the total variance (R^2 = 0.725; see Figure 3.2).



Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

Figure 3.2 Final clusters centers

Cluster 1, known as the *Luxury Enthusiasts*, comprised 145 participants, corresponding to 46.4% of the sample. This group stood out for their high levels of luxury cosmetics usage, self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. They actively engaged in luxury cosmetics routines, which correlated with positive psychological and quality of life outcomes.

Cluster 2, identified as the *Struggling Low-Engagers*, included 71 participants and represented 22.8% of the sample. This group exhibited lower levels of luxury cosmetics usage along with lower scores in self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. They were characterized by infrequent use of luxury cosmetics and reported poorer levels across all measured variables.

Lastly, Cluster 3, termed the *Balanced Achievers*, consisted of 96 participants (30.8%). Despite their lower levels of luxury cosmetics engagement, this group demonstrated moderate levels of self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. They represented individuals who did not frequently use luxury cosmetics but still reported moderate psychological and quality of life outcomes.

The cluster analysis revealed significant differences in luxury cosmetics usage (F = 420.156), self-esteem (F = 992.071), SWB (F = 969.544), and QoL (F = 654.728) among older adults. Among these variables, self-esteem showed the greatest differences among clusters, followed closely by SWB (see Table 3.3).

Table 3.3 Clusters centers and sizes, and *F* statistics for each variable

	Cluster 1 *Luxury Enthusiasts* (n = 145)	**Cluster 2** *Struggling Low-Engagers* (n = 71)	**Cluster 3** *Balanced Achievers* (n = 96)	*F*
1. Luxury cosmetics usage	.89365	-.82145	-.74225	420.156**
2. Self-esteem	.69354	-1.66223	.18182	992.071**
3. Subjective well-being (SWB)	.74042	-1.62750	.08532	969.544**
4. Quality of life (QoL)	.70718	-1.58375	.10317	654.728**

** p <.001

Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

3.3. Sociodemographic, health, and lifestyle characteristics across clusters

Chi-square analysis revealed statistically significant differences in sociodemographic, health, and lifestyle characteristics across the three clusters, except for the “Retirement status” (see Table 3.4). Notably, “Engagement in leisure activities”, “Family annual income” and “Educational level” had the highest values, significantly differentiating the clusters. In contrast, “Age group”, “Household” and “Marital status” variables had the lowest values, indicating that these factors were less influential in distinguishing between the clusters. These results highlight that factors related to lifestyle and financial status were more critical in defining cluster variations than demographic attributes like age and household composition.

Table 3.4 Clusters according to sociodemographic, health and lifestyle characteristics

	N	**Cluster 1** ***Luxury Enthusiasts*** High LC/High SE/High SWB/High QoL *n* = 145 (46.4%)	**Cluster 2** ***Struggling Low-Engagers*** Low LC/Low SE/ Low SWB/Low QoL *n* = 71 (22.8%)	**Cluster 3** ***Balanced Achievers*** Low LC/Moderate SE/ Moderate SWB/ Moderate QoL *n* = 96 (30.8%)	χ^2	*df*	*Sig.*
Age group							
60-69 years-old	239	116 (48.5%)	52 (21.8%)	71 (29.7%)			
70-79 years-old	55	25 (45.5%)	16 (29.1%)	14 (25.4%)	9.855	6	<.043
80+ years-old	18	4 (22.2%)	3 (16.7%)	11 (61.1%)			
Biological sex							
Female	259	142 (54.8%)	66 (25.5%)	51 (19.7%)	88.676	2	<.001
Male	53	3 (5.7%)	5 (9.4%)	45 (84.9%)			
Educational level							
< Secondary	75	10 (13.3%)	51 (68.0%)	14 (18.7%)			
Secondary	122	60 (49.2%)	20 (16.4%)	42 (34.4%)	127.117	4	<.001
> Secondary	115	75 (65.2%)	0 (0.0%)	40 (34.8%)			
Marital status							
Single	24	1 (4.2%)	9 (37.5%)	14 (58.3%)			
Married/*de facto* union	207	119 (57.5%)	31 (15.0%)	57 (27.5%)	44.804	6	<.001
Divorced/separated	50	18 (36.0%)	20 (40.0%)	12 (24.0%)			
Widow	31	7 (22.6%)	11 (35.5%)	13 (41.9%)			
Household							
Living alone	46	6 (13.0%)	24 (52.2%)	16 (34.8%)	33.776	2	<.001
Living with someone	266	139 (52.2%)	47 (17.7%)	80 (30.1%)			
Family annual income							
≤ 40,000 €	163	28 (17.2%)	69 (42.3%)	66 (40.5%)	130. 988	2	<.001
> 40,000 €	149	117 (78.5%)	2 (1.4%)	30 (20.1%)			
Retirement status							
Retired	200	86 (43.0%)	48 (24.0%)	66 (33.0%)	2.727	2	0.256
Not retired	112	59 (52.7%)	23 (20.5%)	30 (26.8%)			
Perceived general health							
Good	284	145 (51.1%)	50 (17.6%)	89 (31.3%)	51.523	2	<.001
Poor	28	0 (0.0%)	21 (75.0%)	7 (25.0%)			
Engagement in leisure activities							
Yes	218	137 (62.8%)	11 (5.1%)	70 (32.1%)	141.877	2	<.001
No	94	8 (8.5%)	60 (63.8%)	26 (27.7%)			

LC: Luxury cosmetics usage
SE: Self-esteem

Source: Author's own elaboration using data from SPSS

These findings indicated significant differences for the three clusters, concerning age group [χ^2 (6) = 9.855, p < .043]. Cluster 1 predominantly consisted of individuals in their 60s and 70s years old. Cluster 2 included individuals in their 70s, while Cluster 3 was primarily composed of individuals aged 80 and above.

Regarding biological sex [χ^2 (2) = 88.676, p < .001], Cluster 1 had a significantly higher proportion of females, whereas Cluster 3 was predominantly male. Cluster 2 also had more females than males, but to a lesser extent compared to Cluster 1.

Educational level varied significantly across clusters [χ^2 (4) = 127.117, p < .001]. Cluster 1 contained the highest proportion of individuals with higher education level, while Cluster 2 mainly consisted of individuals with lower education background.

Marital status also showed significantly distinct patterns [χ^2 (6) = 44.804, p < .001]. Cluster 1 had a higher proportion of individuals who were married or in *de facto* unions. In contrast, Cluster 2 had a higher percentage of divorced or separated individuals, while Cluster 3 had the highest proportion of single individuals.

Concerning the household composition [χ^2 (2) = 33.776, p < .001], Cluster 1 had more individuals living with someone, whereas Cluster 2 had a higher percentage of individuals living alone.

Income levels also showed significant differences [χ^2 (2) = 130.988, p < .001]. Cluster 1 had the highest proportion of individuals with a higher income, while Cluster 2 and 3 predominantly consisted of individuals with lower income, although Cluster 3 had a notable proportion with higher incomes as well.

Retirement status was the only variable that did not show significant differences across the clusters [χ^2 (2) = 2.727, p = 0.256]. Nonetheless, Cluster 1 predominantly consisted of non-retired individuals, whereas Cluster 2 had a higher proportion of retired participants.

Regarding the perceived general health [χ^2 (2) = 51.523, p < .001], Cluster 1 and 3 had the highest proportion of individuals perceiving their health as good, although Cluster 1 had a greater share. In contrast, Cluster 2 had individuals with poorer perceptions about their health.

Lastly, engagement in leisure activities [$\chi 2$ (2) = 141.877, p < .001] was higher in Cluster 1 and 3, while Cluster 2 predominantly consisted of participants who did not engage.

Overall, the analysis revealed distinct clusters of older adults based on their sociodemographic, health, and lifestyle characteristics. Lifestyle factors, particularly engagement in leisure activities and family income, emerged as key differentiators between clusters, while perceived health status played a moderate role, not as prominent as some lifestyle factors, but still significant and more influential than certain demographic variables. All factors analyzed were statistically significant, highlighting the varied profiles within the study population.

CHAPTER 4

Discussion

4.1. Influence of luxury cosmetics usage on self-esteem, SWB and QoL

Guided by the importance of aging, and older adults' well-being, this study's first goal investigates the influence of luxury cosmetics usage on the self-esteem, SWB, and QoL of older adults. The results from the simple linear regression analyses reveal significant positive relationships between luxury cosmetics usage and all three dependent variables. Specifically, luxury cosmetics usage explains 32.0% of the variance in self-esteem (R^2 = .320), 35.8% of the variance in SWB (R^2 = .358), and 31.5% of the variance in QoL (R^2 = .315). These R^2 values are considered low (Moore et al., 2013), indicating that while luxury cosmetics usage has a meaningful influence, there are other factors contributing to self-esteem, SWB, and QoL in old age.

This relationship between luxury cosmetics usage and self-esteem can also be understood through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1954). According to Maslow, self-esteem is positioned near the top of the hierarchy, indicating its importance for achieving self-actualization. Luxury cosmetics usage may fulfill the esteem needs by providing individuals with a sense of accomplishment, self-respect, and recognition, thereby further enhancing their overall well-being (Loureiro et al., 2020). Although luxury cosmetics usage has a statistically significant impact on self-esteem, this effect is relatively low. According to Sirgy and Wu (2009), a balanced life, where multiple needs are addressed, is more beneficial than focusing solely on one aspect. Desmet and Fokkinga (2020) also supports this view by noting that fulfilling a variety of needs through a mix of daily activities, such as social relationships and physical needs, is essential for optimal SWB. For instance, although luxury products may offer temporary satisfaction, a holistic approach that includes meeting a range of life needs – such as social connections and meaningful activities – is necessary for a more substantial and lasting improvement in self-esteem. Therefore, while luxury cosmetics can enhance self-esteem, they cannot replace the fulfillment of other essential needs such as personal relationships, health, or a sense of purpose.

The results imply that greater levels of self-esteem, SWB, and QoL are linked to older adults who use luxury cosmetics more often. Individuals' interest in appearance and presenting oneself positively is influenced by efforts to reflect their perceived age (Guido et al., 2014). Therefore, the desire to increase self-esteem and one's self-image – both of which are essential for older adults' physical and mental well-being (Chen et al., 2018) – drives the usage of anti-

aging items (Assawavichairoj & Taghian, 2017). Another study, exploring the use of cosmetics in a self-care routine, showed that it can improve mental and physical relaxation (Bouhout et al., 2023). This practice serves as a means of self-affirmation and self-respect by placing a value on one's own well-being and recognizing one's own worth. These motivations highlight the psychological benefits associated with using luxury cosmetics, contributing to improved self-esteem, SWB, and QoL among older adults.

These findings also align with the large body of research on luxury consumption. For instance, according to Hennigs et al. (2015), luxury value is multifaceted and involves individual, social, functional, and financial aspects. Specifically, enhancing self-esteem, SWB, and QoL are examples of the individual component, while the social dimension is connected to the status and prestige that come with using luxury brands. The participants' inclination to purchase high-priced cosmetics is indicative of the financial aspect, and the believed efficacy and quality of these cosmetics are indicative of their functional element. Luxury cosmetics meet deeper psychological and social requirements in addition to being beauty items, which is in accordance with the intricate and interconnected elements that Hennigs et al. (2015) identified as driving luxury purchasing patterns.

Using luxury can improve people's views of their social standing and interactions, which can improve their general feeling of well-being (Nelissen & Meijers, 2011). The hedonistic and status-driven nature of luxury cosmetic companies influence consumer attitudes and behaviors, demonstrating how psychological and symbolic factors influence decisions (Ajitha & Sivakumar, 2017). This study emphasizes the notion that the symbolic value of luxury cosmetics improves personal pleasure, supporting the premise that using them is associated with increased self-esteem and well-being.

Moreover, Choi et al. (2020) supported the idea that luxury goods and services offer advantages for self-enhancement, including affirmations of one's own worth, dignity, and contentment. For some individuals, the use of these luxury cosmetics is meaningful as it helps fulfill their desire to feel confident, respected, or satisfied with their looks, which in turn improves their self-esteem and general well-being (Berger, 2014; Kwon et al., 2017).

Furthermore, Atkinson and Kang (2022) delved into the idea of "new luxury," emphasizing the importance of sensory enjoyment and personal satisfaction. While the focus of their research was on younger consumers, our study's older individuals appear to derive similar intrinsic and psychological advantages from luxury, which may be seen as a means of enhancing one's own life. The way that luxury is consumed is changing; these days, people appreciate luxury more for the inner happiness and contentment it brings than for how it looks on the outside.

4.2. Cluster profiles

The second goal of this study allows us to identify groups of older individuals with similar usage behavior of luxury cosmetics and examine whether these groups differ in terms of self-esteem, SWB, QoL, or their sociodemographic characteristics. Based on the results of the K-means cluster analysis, three clusters with unique characteristics are identified.

Luxury Enthusiasts (Cluster 1), comprising 46.4% of the participants, demonstrate a robust association between higher engagement with luxury cosmetics and positive outcomes in self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. According to a recent study by Wu and Chao (2023), older individuals' self-perceptions of aging may be markedly improved, and their symptoms of depression can be greatly reduced when they actively participate in self-care activities. This improvement is especially notable through cosmetic treatments, such as makeup use and facial skin care. This underscores the potential psychological benefits of such interventions, aligning with the notion that luxury cosmetics, for *Luxury Enthusiasts*, function not merely as products but as integral components of a broader self-care strategy that enhances psychological well-being.

The *Struggling Low-Engagers* (Cluster 2), comprising 22.8% of the participants, are characterized by lower engagement with luxury cosmetics, which correlates with significantly lower scores in self-esteem, SWB, and QoL. This cluster's profile suggests that their limited involvement in luxury cosmetics may be influenced by shifting priorities towards functional aspects of aging rather than purely cosmetic enhancements. Kilpela et al. (2015) highlighted the importance that body image plays in forming self-esteem and claimed that it is a significant predictor of health and well-being in aging women. This decreased interest in cosmetics, however, can be connected to the idea that as individuals become older, functional components of their bodies – like health and mobility – may take precedence over cosmetic or appearance-related qualities when it comes to body image (Hurd, 2000). This shift in values may contribute to lower engagement with luxury cosmetics among *Struggling Low-Engagers*, who may prioritize other aspects of aging well. Additionally, literature has indicated that among older adults, maintaining a good skin and a positive body image are key parts of mental and emotional well-being (Blume-Peytavi et al., 2016). However, our study presents similar results in a different perspective, finding that lower engagement with luxury cosmetics is associated with reduced self-esteem and lower levels of SWB and QoL, suggesting that the use of these cosmetics can impact mental health in older age.

Balanced Achievers (Cluster 3), making up 30.8% of the participants, show a different pattern, with lower use of luxury cosmetics but moderate levels of self-esteem, SWB, and QoL.

This cluster's profile suggests that while they do not prioritize luxury cosmetics, they maintain satisfactory psychological and quality of life outcomes. This highlights that there may be other pathways to enhance self-esteem in older age. Igbokwe et al. (2024) showed that social support from family and close friends encouraged a healthy lifestyle and helped people age well, which greatly increased self-esteem. Furthermore, perceived social support indirectly improves overall health by enhancing SWB (Farriol-Baroni et al., 2021). According to Wagner et al. (2013), aging-related health issues do not have to be a barrier to retaining a positive sense of self-esteem. Beyond cosmetic usage, social engagement and adaptive strategies for coping may contribute to this resilience in self-esteem. This shows that luxury cosmetics are not prerequisites for older people's well-being; rather, other elements like social support, resilience, and taking part in worthwhile activities can be of greater significance.

4.3. Sociodemographic characteristics of the identified clusters

4.3.1. Cluster 1: *Luxury Enthusiasts*

The findings reveal that *Luxury Enthusiasts*, participants in Cluster 1, are predominantly younger older adults. As noted by Ogihara and Kusumi (2020), the developmental trajectory of self-esteem may vary throughout generations, which may have an effect on how various age groups see and participate in self-care activities. Younger older individuals in Cluster 1 can be more receptive to modern beauty standards and marketing, which can increase their interest in luxury cosmetics.

Cluster 1 also has the largest percentage of women and individuals with a higher education level. According to research, women have a larger hedonic drive for shopping than men do, and they utilize their purchases to control their mood, create pleasant emotions, and relieve stress in their everyday life (Davis et al., 2014). Moreover, higher levels of education among *Luxury Enthusiasts* can be a factor in people's growing understanding of the advantages of luxury cosmetics, including skincare and mental health. People with higher education are typically more exposed to knowledge on the health benefits of cosmetics, which may increase their usage rates. Education promotes the adoption of healthy behaviors in addition to providing understanding of the advantages to health (Raghupathi & Raghupathi, 2020). This is consistent with research showing a positive correlation between education and understanding of cosmetic functions and health-conscious habits. For instance, Vasques and Leonardi (2023) indicated a correlation between greater levels of education and the use of makeup, sunscreen, and functional cosmetics.

Moreover, married people, who make up the largest portion in Cluster 1, frequently prioritize keeping up their good looks for their partners, which can lead to a larger use of luxury cosmetics. This demonstrates how marriage connections have great effects on self-care practices and self-esteem. Studies have shown that although faces may be viewed as less appealing as people age, facial beauty still has an enormous impact on social interactions (He et al., 2021). Men and women, for example, can buy these goods to improve their partners' or their own looks, subtly communicating to others their social standing (Winegard et al., 2013). This conduct implies that luxury products can have the potential to function as both direct and indirect tools for social signaling and relationship management.

Luxury Enthusiasts are also characterized by individuals living with someone, which can have an impact on social interactions and joint decision-making at home, creating a welcoming atmosphere for the use of luxury cosmetics. Research has shown that social influence at home is significant in encouraging self-care behaviors, specifically in personal hygiene, eating a healthy diet, and engaging in activities that improve quality of life (Butler et al., 2019; Urpí-Fernández et al., 2020). This reinforces the notion that supportive home surroundings and social interactions are essential for encouraging and maintaining self-care practices and general well-being, including the use of luxury cosmetics by older individuals living with the spouse or other relatives.

Furthermore, *Luxury Enthusiasts* are the ones who hold more financial resources, which makes it easier for them to purchase luxury cosmetics. Guido et al. (2020) noted that these people have a significant amount of purchasing power and information access, which allows them to make informed decisions. Additionally, higher income has been positively related with improved health (Tiago et al., 2016), suggesting that these individuals tend to focus on goods or activities related to their health, which can include luxury cosmetics. Furthermore, older consumers, such as *Luxury Enthusiasts*, are becoming more educated, physically active, and engaged in socio-cultural activities, making them ideal candidates for personalized financial products, and marketers should reconsider their strategies to better serve this underserved consumer segment (Guido et al., 2020).

Higher engagement in leisure activities, as seen among participants in Cluster 1, can foster socialization and exposure to trends or norms, including beauty and self-care practices. Leisure activities frequently include social contacts and involvement in group events where appearance may be important. Consumers may associate with people who are viewed as intelligent or sophisticated, as suggested by Eckhardt et al. (2015) and Maciel and Wallendorf (2017), conveying to others that they are a member of a community of influential people associated

with luxury brands. Those who regularly engage in leisure activities may use luxury cosmetics more frequently as a result of this social exposure, either on advice from others or as a way to keep up with current beauty trends and preserve a desired social image.

Cluster 1 suggests a strong correlation between personal indulgence in luxury products and higher well-being. This cluster likely represents individuals who are able to afford luxury but also derive significant emotional and psychological benefits from their consumption patterns, reflecting a lifestyle that prioritizes both material and emotional fulfillment.

4.3.2. Cluster 2: *Struggling Low-Engagers*

Conversely, *Struggling Low-Engagers* represent the highest percentage of divorced or separated, and living alone, suggesting that they would not have the same access to social support and influence at their home compared to Cluster 1. Studies revealed that well-being activities, such as self-care, are greatly influenced by shared living arrangements and supportive family situations (Torres-Soto et al., 2022).

This cluster has the highest proportion of individuals with poor perceived health, while the rest are included in Cluster 3. *Struggling Low-Engagers*' emphasis on functional well-being over upscale cosmetics probably reflects their concern for maintaining basic functionality and managing health issues, which is consistent with Wulfman et al.'s (2010) finding that older adults' health concerns frequently take precedence over aesthetic considerations. Baby Boomers may pay greater attention to beauty than older generations do, but as they become older, appearance becomes less significant as focus moves more toward overall health (Wulfman et al., 2010).

Moreover, individuals in this cluster who perceive their health negatively may be less inclined to invest in cosmetic products, as these do not address deeper health concerns. This aligns with a broader trend in medical tourism, where health and confidence in treatments are prioritized over superficial enhancements and highlights the importance of satisfaction with cosmetic results (Rodrigues & Brochado, 2021). For *Struggling Low-Engagers*, effective health management and confidence in treatment outcomes may overshadow the appeal of cosmetic products. Therefore, addressing health issues, improving treatment outcomes, and ensuring genuine satisfaction with results may be more effective for enhancing their self-esteem and well-being.

Struggling Low-Engagers are also characterized by their lower incomes, who can experience financial difficulties, especially because of large medical costs such health insurance, medications, and medical services (Blakely et al., 2014). Compared to people in

Cluster 1, their capacity to use savings on luxury cosmetics is probably restricted by this financial burden. Even though *Struggling Low-Engagers* are unable to afford such indulgent spending, Hudders (2012) pointed out that, even low-income buyers frequently purchase premium products because of the psychological advantages they provide. These purchases are driven by the attractiveness of luxury brands, which are distinguished by their perceived excellence and exclusivity, even in the face of financial limitations. This emphasizes that there are a variety of reasons people use luxury cosmetics, including impressive (signaling social standing, impressing others, and demonstrating sophistication) and expressive (boosting self-esteem) objectives.

Cluster 2 highlights a lifestyle where limited financial resources and poor perceived health are significant factors. The predominance of lower income within this cluster, combined with poorer health perceptions, reflects the challenges of navigating a satisfying and active lifestyle under economic constraints.

4.3.3. Cluster 3: *Balanced Achievers*

Balanced Achievers, participants in Cluster 3, are predominantly composed of an older generation of older individuals, which might have different priorities than younger older adults (Khoshtaria, 2018). The low engagement with luxury cosmetics among participants in Cluster 3 may be explained by older generations emphasizing the utilitarian elements of aging rather than beauty.

Men are also well represented in Cluster 3. Men can improve their well-being and sense of self through alternatives options that do not include luxury cosmetics. Men are more likely than women to acquire electronics and other technological goods, which may be sources of personal fulfillment and status symbols (Biolcati, 2017). Through channels more in line with conventional male interests and values, these purchases support outcomes related to well-being and self-esteem by reflecting many facets of self-expression and identity. While men do not frequently use cosmetics themselves, they may buy it for a spouse or other relative. It has been demonstrated that giving gifts and spending money on others makes people feel good and can enhance well-being, which encourages people to purchase goods for loved ones (Dunn et al., 2014). This practice implies that the benefits of luxury products may go beyond their users to their close social circles, promoting interpersonal peace and self-satisfaction.

Considering the study on successful aging, which describes four domains – having high cognitive, mental, and physical function, avoiding disease and disability, being psychologically well-adapted in later life, and being actively engaged in life (Kim & Park, 2017), the focus of

Balanced Achievers may be on broader aspects of health. These individuals may have accepted aging as a natural process and might view their appearance as a normal part of aging well, rather than something to be altered. This perspective aligns with Dionigi et al. (2013), who discovered that older individuals could resist, redefine, or accept the aging process. Cluster 3 seems to represent acceptance, whereas Cluster 1 may represent resistance, with participants significantly valuing appearance and using luxury cosmetics to avoid or fight the aging process. Therefore, the differences in luxury cosmetics usage among these clusters can be linked to their varying priorities and perceptions of health and aging.

Moreover, *Balanced Achievers* may also attribute their well-being to their leisure activities but for different reasons. According to research, engaging in leisure activities can improve mood and self-esteem, promote emotional well-being through interactions with friends and family, and reduce feelings of anxiety, stress (Smith et al., 2017) and depression (Chiu et al., 2013). This engagement sheds light on how *Balanced Achievers* maintain positive psychological outcomes even in the absence of luxury cosmetic use.

Cluster 3 suggests a balanced and practical approach to life. This cluster's perceived good health and active participation in leisure activities demonstrate that they find contentment through a stable and engaged lifestyle, valuing both practical satisfaction and involvement in enjoyable pursuits over material indulgence.

Retirement status is the only sociodemographic variable not statistically significant, implying that there is no meaningful difference in this variable between the clusters. Rather than changes brought on by retirement, this lack of relevance may be the result of varied views on cosmetics and self-care practices formed across a lifetime. Although some habits are difficult to change, important life events and shifting conditions can have an impact on them. For instance, Mościcka et al. (2020) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, Polish women's hygienic and cosmetic practices changed. The frequency of applying colored cosmetics on the face decreased, whereas hand cream use grew noticeably. Consequently, rather than the anticipated influence of retirement itself, the impact of retirement status on the use of luxury cosmetics may be surpassed by characteristics related to a person's lifestyle or personal history.

Additionally, retirees frequently have varied lives and experiences, making it challenging to generalize about how retirement affects the use of luxury cosmetics. According to Zantinge et al. (2014), depending on the retiree's individual circumstances and lifestyle type, both positive and negative changes occur during the transition to retirement. Therefore, while some retirees may continue to prioritize self-care and beauty, others may focus on other elements of their lives, leaving no distinct pattern tied to retirement status.

4.3. Implications

The findings of this study provide a substantial contribution to the body of literature on luxury consumption and its psychological effects, especially on older individuals. The positive correlations between the use of luxury cosmetics and self-esteem, SWB, and QoL support the multifaceted nature of luxury value as proposed by Hennigs et al. (2015). It also reenforces the theoretical position that luxury consumption is linked to psychological advantages, as supported by Choi et al. (2020) and Kwon et al. (2017), offering a more nuanced understanding of how luxury goods may improve a person's well-being and sense of self, particularly on a population that is frequently disregarded in studies on luxury consumption.

In addition, this study advances the theoretical knowledge of consumer behavior and aging. By identifying distinct clusters of older adults with varying levels of engagement in luxury cosmetics, this research extends the application of consumer behavior theories to an aging population. In particular, the results are consistent with the research conducted by Desmet and Fokkinga (2020) and Sirgy and Wu (2009), who highlighted the need of maintaining a balance between multiple needs to achieve optimal well-being. Moreover, the research demonstrates that the impact of luxury cosmetics on self-esteem is not uniform but varies significantly across different socio-demographic profiles, building on the work of Cao et al. (2018), who posited that consumer preferences are influenced by a range of factors including age, gender, socio-economic status, health and lifestyle. Consequently, this study enriches theoretical discussions on luxury consumption and its psychological effects, aging and consumer behavior, advocating for a multi-dimensional approach that considers the complex interrelationships between luxury consumption and other life factors in the pursuit of well-being.

Moreover, building on Cristini et al. (2024) argument for a shift from individualistic luxury to a more holistic well-being perspective, this study suggests that luxury cosmetics consumption among older adults might be evolving toward an integrated approach to well-being. Although the focus remains largely on self-enhancement and personal care, consumption patterns among older adults may also reflect a broader sense of well-being beyond the individual. This shift could bridge individualistic and collective well-being. For instance, *Luxury Enthusiasts* may embody the traditional individualistic luxury model, focusing on personal enhancement. However, as Cristini et al. (2024) proposed, the consumption pattern of luxury cosmetics among older adults may evolve towards a more inclusive, sustainable model that aligns with both personal self-care and collective well-being, prompting luxury brands to adapt their value propositions accordingly.

The identification of distinct clusters of older adults based on luxury cosmetics usage extends consumer behavior theories to aging populations and enriches the discussion on luxury consumption's impact on well-being across different demographics. This aligns with Kotler's (2011) encouragement for companies to become customer-driven and foster customer-centricity. Consequently, by identifying these clusters – *Luxury Enthusiasts, Struggling Low-Engagers,* and *Balanced Achievers* – marketers can develop tailored strategies that better address the needs and preferences of older consumers.

From a consumer behavior perspective, this study provides insights into how older adults interact with luxury cosmetics, revealing opportunities for brands to adapt their strategies to better meet the needs of this demographic. Understanding that luxury cosmetics consumption among older adults can influence their self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, brands can develop more nuanced marketing messages that resonate with the psychological and emotional needs of this audience. By emphasizing how luxury cosmetics contribute not just to external beauty but also to a deeper sense of self-worth and well-being, marketers can create campaigns that align with the values and desires of older consumers.

Therefore, marketers and brand managers in the luxurious cosmetics sector can also benefit from the findings of this study. *Luxury Enthusiasts* may be interested in marketing initiatives focusing on beauty enhancements and anti-aging benefits, driving their desire for luxury goods. Strategies for *Struggling Low-Engagers* can emphasize the long-term advantages of using luxury cosmetics. For instance, offering introductory promotions or trial sizes might encourage the usage. Furthermore, demonstrating how these cosmetics can positively affect mental well-being over time can also be a powerful motivator to convince this group to invest in their self-care routines. For *Balanced Achievers*, marketing should spotlight the practical benefits of luxury cosmetics, such as enhancing general well-being and skin health. For example, campaigns that seamlessly integrate these products into everyday routines, highlighting their ease of use and health benefits. Luxury cosmetics companies can succeed in captivating older individuals, promoting loyalty and solidifying their position in the market by adapting their marketing methods to the unique demands and preferences of these different groups.

Furthermore, this research offers practical guidance for policymakers and organizations aiming to promote healthy aging and well-being among older demographics. The findings highlight the need of taking into account a range of sociodemographic factors, such as income, marital status, and social participation, when creating programs targeted at enhancing the SWB and QoL for older people. For instance, initiatives that encourage community participation and social inclusion can help older people lead more balanced and satisfying lives. In addition, the

fact that luxury cosmetics use has a limited influence on self-esteem emphasizes the need for holistic well-being programs that incorporate multiple elements of life, such as social support, health, and personal fulfillment. These understandings can guide the development of programs and policies that promote older persons' general well-being, producing more significant and successful results in aging populations.

Conclusions and Future Recommendations

This study explores the influence of luxury cosmetics usage on older adults' self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, and identifies distinct groups based on their luxury consumption patterns.

Firstly, the findings confirm that luxury cosmetics usage does have a significant influence on older adults' self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, although the impact is low. While luxury products contribute positively to these aspects, other factors also play significant roles in influencing well-being among older adults. The connection between luxury consumption and enhanced self-esteem and well-being indicates that material indulgence can have some beneficial effects, but it is likely that psychological, social, and economic factors also significantly shape overall well-being in old age.

Secondly, the study identifies three distinct groups based on their luxury cosmetics usage patterns. These groups differ significantly in their self-esteem, SWB, QoL, and sociodemographic characteristics. *Luxury Enthusiasts* in Cluster 1, who engage with luxury cosmetics, report higher levels of self-esteem, SWB and QoL. They are distinguished by their younger age, being married and well-educated, alongside enjoying higher incomes, positive health perceptions, and active participation in leisure activities. In contrast, both *Struggling Low-Engagers* in Cluster 2 and *Balanced Achievers* in Cluster 3 have a lower engagement with luxury cosmetics. *Struggling Low-Engagers* show lower self-esteem, SWB, and QoL, and these are influenced by economic constraints, lower education, poor perceived health and limited involvement in leisure activities. Meanwhile, *Balanced Achievers* maintain moderated levels of self-esteem, SWB and QoL and is marked by the high proportions of men, older generations and actively engaged in leisure activities, reflecting a stable and satisfied lifestyle. These findings illustrate the complexity of factors affecting older adults' well-being and highlight the interplay between luxury consumption and broader sociodemographic influences.

The specific sample size limits the generalizability of the results, and the higher proportion of female participants compared to male participants can bias the findings, given potential gender differences in attitudes towards luxury cosmetics and self-care. Future studies should aim for a more diverse sample to mitigate any potential gender biases and provide a clearer understanding of how attitudes toward luxury cosmetics and self-care may differ between genders.

Future research could focus on longitudinal studies to investigate how changes in luxury cosmetics usage influence self-esteem and overall well-being over time. Additionally, it would be valuable to investigate the effects of different levels of luxury cosmetics engagement within

the group of individuals who use these products. Comparing those with high, moderate, and low frequencies of luxury cosmetics usage could reveal nuanced differences in self-esteem and well-being, helping to understand whether variations in engagement levels have distinct psychological outcomes. Qualitative research could also enrich the findings by gaining deeper insights into the personal experiences and motivations of individuals in each cluster.

This study underscores the nuanced role that luxury cosmetics play in shaping older adults' self-esteem, well-being, and quality of life, revealing profound connections that extend beyond mere material indulgence.

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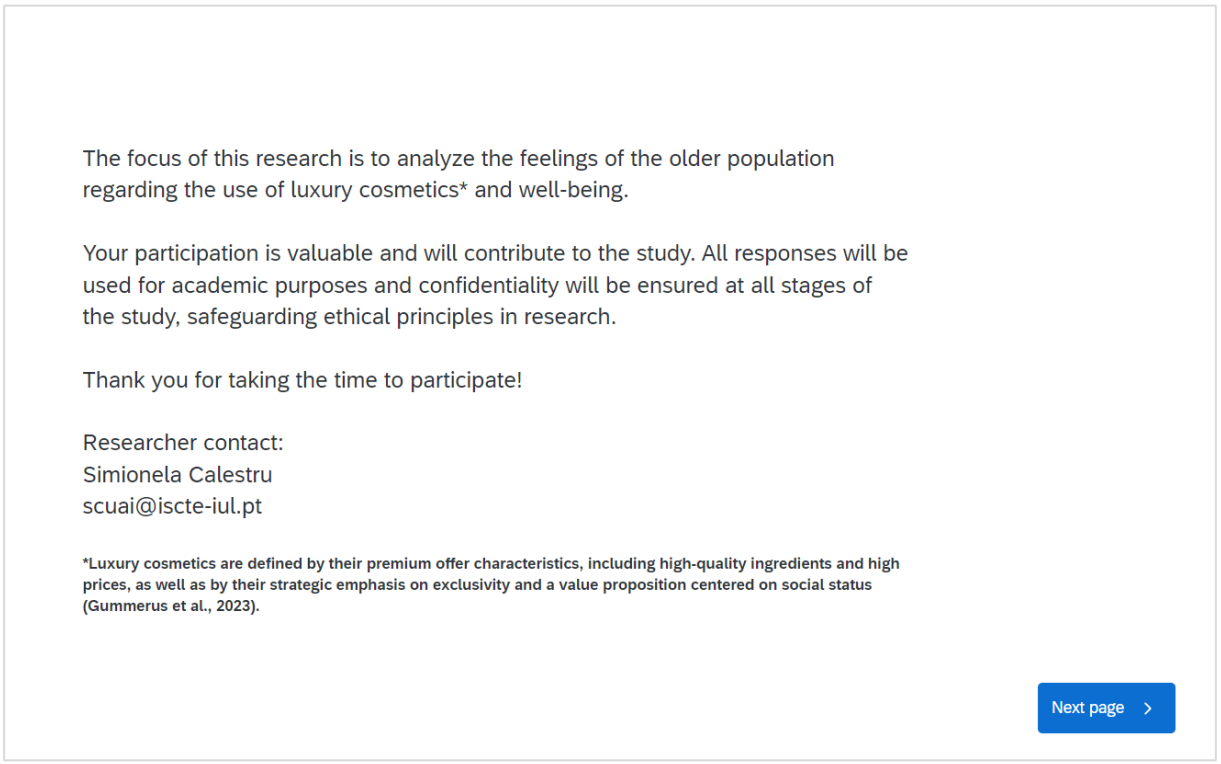
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Annexes

Annex A

Page 1. Introduction section



Page 2. Age question



Page 3. Sociodemographic, health, and lifestyle questions

*What is your gender?

- ◯ Feminine
- ◯ Masculine
- ◯ Other
- ◯ Prefer not to say

*What was the last level of education you completed?

- ◯ Primary education
- ◯ Middle education
- ◯ Secondary education
- ◯ Bachelor's degree
- ◯ Master's or Doctoral degree

*What is your marital status?

- ◯ Single
- ◯ Married/de facto union
- ◯ Divorced/separated
- ◯ Widow

*What is your household?

- ◯ Living alone
- ◯ Living with spouse
- ◯ Living with descendants
- ◯ Living with spouse and descendants

*What is your household's approximate gross annual income?

- ◯ ≤ 10.000€
- ◯ 10.001€ - 25.000€
- ◯ 25.001€ - 40.000€
- ◯ 40.001€ - 55.000€
- ◯ ≥ 55.001€

*Are you retired?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

*How would you describe your overall health status?

- ◯ Good
- ◯ Poor

*Do you engage in any leisure activities in your free time?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

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Page 4. Engagement with luxury cosmetics questions

*How often do you purchase luxury cosmetics?

- ◯ Weekly
- ◯ Monthly
- ◯ Occasionally
- ◯ Rarely
- ◯ Never

*How many luxury cosmetics products do you currently own?

- ◯ None
- ◯ 1-3 product(s)
- ◯ 4-6 products
- ◯ 7-10 products
- ◯ More than 10 products

How long have you been using luxury cosmetics?
at least twice a month

- ◯ Less than 6 months
- ◯ 6-12 months
- ◯ 1-3 year(s)
- ◯ More than 3 years
- ◯ I do not use luxury cosmetics

*On average, how much do you spend on luxury cosmetics per month?

- ◯ Less than 50€
- ◯ 50€ - 100€
- ◯ 100€ - 200€
- ◯ More than 200€
- ◯ I do not buy luxury cosmetics

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Page 5. Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)

*Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Neither agree nor disagree	5 Slightly agree	6 Agree	7 Stongly Agree
On the whole, I am satisfied with myself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
At times, I think I am no good at all	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I have a number of good qualities	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am able to do things as well as most other people	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel I do not have much to be proud of	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I certainly feel useless at times	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I wish I could have more respect for myself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I take a positive attitude toward myself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Page 6. Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS)

*Please indicate the extent you have felt this way over the past week:

	1 Not at all	2 Very slightly	3 A little	4 Moderately	5 Sometimes	6 Quite a bit	7 Extremely
Interested	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Distressed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Excited	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Upset	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Strong	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Guilty	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Scared	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hostile	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Enthusiastic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Proud	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Irritable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Alert	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ashamed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inspired	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Nervous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Determined	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Attentive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jittery	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Active	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Afraid	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Page 7. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

*Please indicate your agreement with each item:

	1 Strongly disagree	2 Disagree	3 Slightly disagree	4 Neither agree nor disagree	5 Slightly agree	6 Agree	7 Strongly agree
In most ways my life is close to my ideal.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The conditions of my life are excellent.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am satisfied with my life.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
So far I have gotten the important things I want in life.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Page 8. Quality of Life Scale (QOLS)

*Please indicate how satisfied you are at this time:

Please answer each item even if you do not currently participate in an activity or have a relationship. You can be satisfied or dissatisfied with not doing the activity or having the relationship

	1 Terrible	2 Unhappy	3 Mostly dissatisfied	4 Mixed	5 Mostly satisfied	6 Pleased	7 Delighted
Material comforts: home, food, conveniences, financial security	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Health: being physically fit and vigorous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Relationships with parents, siblings & other relatives: communicating, visiting, helping	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Having and rearing children	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Close relationships with spouse or significant other	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Close friends	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Helping and encouraging others, volunteering, giving advice	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participating in organizations and public affairs	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Learning: attending school, improving understanding, getting additional knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Understanding yourself: knowing your assets and limitations - knowing what life is about	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Work: job or in home	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Expressing yourself creatively	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Socializing: meeting other people, doing things, parties, etc	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Reading, listening to music, or observing entertainment	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Participating in active recreation	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Independence: doing for yourself	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Page 9. Conclusion section

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.