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Selling through silence: The rise of minimalism in luxury advertising case study: L'Azurde's Ramadan campaign vs. Damas's traditional approach 2022-2025

 Josiane El Khoury

¹Department of Mass Media and Communications, University of Balamand, Lebanon.

(Email: Josiane.elkhoury@balamand.edu.lb)

Abstract

In luxury marketing, brand visuals and storytelling do more than show off wealth—they reflect values, cultural references, and emotional desires. During Ramadan, a spiritually meaningful time in the Middle East, brands often adjust their advertising to match the mood of the season. This paper looks at how two well-known jewelry brands, L'azurde and Damas, use different styles in their Ramadan campaigns to represent luxury. While Damas goes for a rich, traditional look with family-oriented storytelling, L'azurde takes a minimalist path, focusing on calm, spiritual elegance and modern femininity. These aren't just style choices, they reflect different understandings of what luxury means to each brand's audience. Through cultural and psychological analysis, the study explores how these two approaches connect emotionally with viewers. Findings show that both campaigns succeed, but they do so in different ways, depending on who they're speaking to and how those people relate to tradition, age, and lifestyle.

Keywords: Luxury advertising, Luxury market, Brand perception, Brand equity, Ramadan campaign.

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1. Introduction

In luxury advertising, sometimes what a brand doesn't say is just as important as what it does. Choosing between a minimalist or a more decorative, story-filled ad isn't just about design, it's about how the brand sees its audience and how it wants to connect with them emotionally and culturally. This difference becomes especially clear during Ramadan in the Middle East. It's a season when people focus on spirituality, reflection, generosity, and family, and brands try to show respect for that while still standing out. For jewelry brands, it's a unique challenge: how to look aspirational without feeling out of place.

L'azurde, founded in Saudi Arabia in 1980, is now one of the biggest jewelry companies in the MENA region. It's known for blending elegance with modern style. In recent years, L'azurde has taken a minimalist turn in its advertising, especially during Ramadan, using calm visuals, soft lighting, and symbols tied to spirituality and grace. The brand is clearly

aiming at a younger, city-based audience that values both tradition and contemporary expression. These campaigns often show jewelry not as a flashy extra, but as something personal and meaningful, tied to a woman's identity and emotions.

Damas, on the other hand, is all about legacy. It was founded in Syria in 1907 and is now based in Dubai. Over the years, it has become a symbol of Arab tradition and luxury. Its ads usually highlight family bonds, celebrations, and multi-generational gifting, especially during Ramadan. With colorful scenes and emotional storytelling, Damas presents jewelry as part of a bigger story—one that honors heritage and brings people together.

Ramadan is a culturally and emotionally significant season in the Arab world, marked by spiritual reflection, family gatherings, generosity, and the tradition of gift-giving, particularly luxury items such as jewelry. During this time, advertising shifts away from direct product promotion toward emotionally resonant storytelling that reflects shared values and cultural identity. This makes Ramadan an ideal moment to examine how brands communicate luxury, not just through aesthetics, but through meaning. In this context, L'azurde adopts a minimalist approach, using visual simplicity and spiritual symbolism to convey quiet, personal elegance, while Damas relies on a traditional, maximalist strategy centered on family, heritage, and celebration. The contrasting campaigns reflect different interpretations of luxury, shaped by cultural cues and designed to emotionally resonate with distinct consumer segments during a high-emotion season.

This paper explores how these two brands, through their unique visual languages, express what luxury means during Ramadan. L'azurde's ads invite viewers into a quiet, introspective space, using symbols and soft visuals to speak to the heart. Damas, meanwhile, draws people in through warm, familiar stories and a sense of belonging. These differences reflect broader changes in how luxury is understood in the region, especially between generations. While some audiences are drawn to simplicity and spiritual depth, others still connect strongly with tradition and family ties. L'azurde and Damas each offer a version of luxury that speaks to those values in different ways. This contrast reflects a broader shift in advertising: while some consumers associate luxury with minimal design and modern values, others see it as embedded in familial ties, cultural pride, and expressive storytelling. In Lebanon, the Gulf, and other Arab markets, this dynamic becomes especially nuanced, as advertisers navigate diverse generational tastes and evolving gender roles within a religiously observant yet socially fluid environment. Thus, this study frames luxury advertising during Ramadan not as a universal strategy, but as a culturally constructed performance—one that must speak to both personal aspiration and collective memory. L'azurde and Damas, through their distinct visual languages, provide a compelling case study on how brands reimagine luxury within the boundaries of cultural expectation and consumer psychology.

2. Hypothesis

This study hypothesizes that L'azurde and Damas project two opposing visions of luxury through their Ramadan campaigns: one minimalist and contemporary, the other maximalist and traditional. L'azurde appeals to younger, modern women who associate subtlety with sophistication, using minimalistic visuals and emotional quietness to represent spiritual and aesthetic refinement. In contrast, Damas targets a more traditional and culturally anchored audience, using rich visuals, heritage motifs, and emotionally expressive storytelling to convey a sense of timeless luxury tied to familial and social values. These approaches are not arbitrary design decisions; they are intentional constructions based on how different consumer segments in the Arab world interpret and emotionally connect with the concept of luxury, especially during a culturally and religiously significant season.

3. Literature Review

Luxury advertising has evolved from simply showcasing how expensive or exclusive a product is. Today, brands, especially in the luxury sector, are more focused on creating emotional and cultural meaning. Several studies have looked into how branding strategies adapt to fit consumer values, social context, and key cultural moments. In the Middle East, Ramadan is one of the most emotionally charged and culturally rich periods of the year, making it a unique setting to study how luxury brands use style and storytelling to connect with their audiences.

To start, Hennigs, et al. [1] argue that what defines luxury today is not just price or quality, but emotional depth, cultural relevance, and a feeling of exclusivity. In their cross-cultural study, they show that how luxury is perceived depends heavily on how well the branding aligns with cultural values and emotional cues. This is key when comparing L'azurde's clean, almost spiritual branding to Damas's rich, tradition-heavy visuals. Each brand builds an emotional connection in different ways. Similarly, Ko and Megehee [2] highlight how minimalism has become a go-to aesthetic for luxury brands trying to appeal to younger consumers. Their findings show that simplicity signals confidence and authenticity, especially in markets where the product already speaks for itself, like fine jewelry. In L'azurde's case, the minimalist visuals allow the jewelry to shine on its own, helping the brand come across as calm, sophisticated, and emotionally centered.

Maximalism merged with cultural cues, on the other hand, uses vibrant visuals and layered storytelling to create emotional impact. Dion and Arnould [3] looked into this in the context of retail, finding that lavish environments help brands build a sense of timelessness and emotional richness. Damas's Ramadan campaigns fit right into this framework, using detailed scenes and family rituals to build a sense of continuity, memory, and shared culture. Several regional studies also show how advertising during Ramadan becomes more emotionally driven. Mostafa [4] for example, examined Ramadan ads in Egypt and the Gulf and found that viewers responded strongly to traditional and cultural themes like family, generosity, and spirituality. These messages helped build trust and made the brands more memorable. Damas's campaigns follow this formula closely, showing women as emotional pillars in the family and using jewelry as a symbol of love and tradition.

On the other side, Alserhan [5] explored how Islamic values influence branding during religious seasons. His work shows that during times like Ramadan, audiences expect ads to reflect spiritual and moral values. L'azurde captures this expectation through visual cues like crescent moons and serene lighting, without going overboard. The subtlety appeals to younger viewers who still value faith, but don't necessarily want overt religious messaging in their shopping experience. El-Bassiouny [6] also found that the most successful Ramadan campaigns are the ones that feel warm, authentic, and emotionally in tune with the spirit of the month. While many brands go for a rich, maximalist look to evoke family and nostalgia, she notes a growing trend toward spiritual introspection and personal growth. This helps explain why L'azurde's minimalist, symbolic campaigns are gaining popularity: they tap into a quieter, more reflective side of Ramadan. Consumer behavior studies across the Arab world also reveal how both modernity and tradition shape what people expect from luxury. In a survey by Alserhan and Alserhan [7] participants from the Gulf and the Levant said they look for both cultural heritage and global sophistication when choosing luxury brands. This explains why both L'azurde and Damas can thrive in the same markets despite their very different styles. Al-Olayan and Karande [8] also compared Arab and Western ads and found that Arab campaigns tend to focus more on family, tradition, and social roles.

Damas clearly reflects this approach. But L'azurde's move toward a more understated, globally inspired look shows how branding in the region is evolving. Alrababa'h and Ababneh [9] call this shift "culturally hybrid branding," where global visuals are mixed with local meaning to create something new and emotionally relevant. These changes are especially visible among younger consumers. A report from Ipsos MENA [10] found that Millennials and Gen Z in the region are drawn to emotionally intelligent, aesthetically pleasing campaigns. They prefer quiet depth over loud celebration, even during Ramadan. L'azurde seems to be tapping into this preference, while Damas continues to hold its ground with its more traditional, family-centered approach. Lastly, jewelry brands in the Middle East know that Ramadan is a peak season for gift-buying. According to a 2022 report by Campaign Middle East, ads that linked their products to emotional values like faith and generosity saw better results, whether the campaigns were minimal, cultural, or maximal. This shows that both strategies can work if they connect to the audience's emotional world. As Attar [11] puts it, "In the Arab world, what gives luxury its power isn't just the product—it's how well the brand fits into daily life, especially during moments like Ramadan."

4. Methodology

To explore how L'azurde and Damas communicate luxury during Ramadan, this study uses a qualitative approach. The focus is on how each brand builds its identity through visual design, emotional tone, and cultural meaning. By comparing the content of their Ramadan campaigns—especially their videos, social media visuals, and promotional messaging from 2021 to 2024—we can better understand how each one appeals to its specific audience. The analysis pays close attention to the visual choices each brand makes: how they use color, lighting, space, and symbolism. It also looks at the emotions their ads are designed to evoke—whether that's calm reflection or warm family connection. These choices are viewed through the lens of the cultural context in which the campaigns were launched: a season known for spirituality, generosity, and emotional depth. In addition to looking at the content itself, the study also includes a basic audience breakdown. Based on brand communication strategies, public data, and consumer reports from the region, the research identifies the typical L'azurde consumer as younger, more modern, and spiritually inclined. Damas, meanwhile, appeals more to older, tradition-focused women who value family and heritage. This combination of content and audience analysis helps reveal how visual and emotional strategies are shaped by cultural and generational factors. In doing so, the study doesn't just look at how luxury is presented—it explores why those choices work for each audience, especially during a season as emotionally and culturally charged as Ramadan.

5. Theoretical Framework

To understand the differences between L'azurde and Damas's Ramadan campaigns, this paper draws on three main theories: Construal Level Theory [12]. Brand Archetypes [13] and Cultural Branding Theory [14]. Together, these theories help explain how the two brands create meaning—not just visually, but psychologically and culturally.

5.1. Construal Level Theory

Construal Level Theory (CLT) explores how people mentally process things depending on how "close" or "far away" they feel from them. Trope and Liberman [12] explain that the more distant something feels, whether in time, space, or personal relevance, the more abstract we think about it. On the other hand, if something feels close or immediate, we focus on specific, concrete details (p. 440). This theory is especially helpful when analyzing how people react to luxury branding, which often relies on emotional or aspirational cues.

L'azurde's minimalist Ramadan ads fit into what CLT calls high-level construals. Instead of focusing on real-life situations or social gatherings, their visuals are more abstract and symbolic. The soft lighting, slow pacing, and spiritual elements like crescent moons encourage viewers to reflect internally. These types of campaigns ask viewers to think about why they wear jewelry, not just how. As Trope and Liberman [12] put it, high-level thinking focuses on goals and ideals more than specific details (2010, p. 443). So, when L'azurde shows a quiet, elegant scene with no dialogue, it's prompting viewers to connect emotionally and spiritually with the brand.

On the other side, Damas uses what CLT defines as low-level construals. Their ads feature detailed, emotionally rich scenes—like family dinners, gift-giving, and touching moments between generations. This makes the experience feel more immediate and relatable. Trope and Liberman [12] say that low-level construals are more focused on "how" things happen,

and they give more weight to specific actions and emotional details (2010, p. 443). So, Damas's use of color, close-ups, and storytelling pulls viewers into the moment.

This theory also helps explain who connects with which brand. Trope and Liberman [12] suggest that people drawn to higher-level thinking, often younger or cosmopolitan, tend to prefer abstract, aspirational messaging (p. 446). That fits with L'azurde's audience. On the other side, people who connect more with tradition and concrete experiences (usually older, family-focused viewers) are likely to respond better to Damas's detailed, emotional style. In short, CLT helps us see how these brands do more than just look different. They speak to entirely different mindsets. L'azurde leans into aspiration and spirituality, while Damas focuses on warmth, memory, and lived emotion.

5.2. Brand Archetypes

Mark and Pearson [13] build on Carl Jung's work with archetypes, universal character types that show up in stories across cultures. They argue that people instinctively connect with these patterns, and when brands adopt them, they become instantly relatable to audiences. As they put it, "Archetypes help us organize how we experience certain phenomena" and allow people to quickly understand what a brand represents [13].

L'azurde fits the Creator archetype. This type is all about imagination, beauty, and self-expression. The Creator wants to make something meaningful and lasting. Its motto is, "If you can imagine it, it can be done" [13]. L'azurde's minimalist campaigns (focused on elegance, spirituality, and inner reflection) capture this perfectly. The jewelry isn't shown as a flashy status symbol but as a personal expression of beauty and emotion. As Mark and Pearson point out, Creator brands attract people who care about authenticity and want their choices to reflect who they are (p. 85). L'azurde's soft, symbolic ads give space for viewers to imagine themselves in the scene, adding personal meaning to what they see.

Damas blends two archetypes: the Caregiver and the Ruler. The Caregiver is warm, loving, and focused on protecting and nurturing others. Its motto is "Love your neighbor as yourself" (p. 126). In Damas's Ramadan campaigns, this comes through in the way jewelry is passed down between generations or given during meaningful family moments. These gestures are about more than just gifts: they represent care, memory, and emotional connection. At the same time, Damas also plays the Ruler because it is a brand that values tradition, structure, and authority. This archetype stands for stability and legacy, aiming to maintain order and uphold values (p. 136). Damas's century-old history, strong brand identity, and rich visuals all reinforce its role as a trusted, enduring name in Arab luxury.

These archetypes help explain why each brand feels the way it does. L'azurde speaks to a viewer's need for creativity, spirituality, and self-expression. Damas taps into deeper emotions around safety, tradition, and belonging. Together, they offer two very different emotional promises.

5.3. Cultural Branding Theory

Holt [14]. Cultural Branding Theory explores how certain brands become "iconic" by tapping into cultural tensions and offering stories or symbols that help people make sense of those tensions. These brands don't just reflect culture, they shape it. Holt [14] explains that "iconic brands... provide myths that resolve contradictions" in people's lives (p. 8).

In this light, Damas acts as a cultural stabilizer. It draws on what Holt calls "civic myths" (p. 13). These myths are stories that reinforce cultural values and make people feel part of something larger. Through scenes of gifting, family bonding, and ritual, Damas's Ramadan ads reassure viewers that tradition is alive and meaningful. They don't just show luxury by itself, but rather luxury rooted in family and culture. Holt [14] notes that brands become powerful when they "ritualize identity myths in everyday life" (p. 35), and that's exactly what Damas does.

L'azurde, on the other hand, acts more like a cultural innovator. Holt [14] calls these "challenger brands" because they rewrite the rules by tapping into new ideals (p. 74). Instead of showing traditional roles or ceremonies, L'azurde shows quiet introspection, spirituality, and emotional independence. It presents luxury as something internal and personal, not social or showy. Holt argues that iconic brands succeed when they "resolve tensions between individual desires and collective norms" (p. 55), and L'azurde does this by offering a fresh take on what it means to be a modern, faith-minded Arab woman. L'azurde's ads are also doing something else Holt [14] sees as essential to iconic brands: creating new conventions. By minimizing traditional Ramadan symbols and focusing on emotional stillness, L'azurde is reshaping how Ramadan luxury can look and feel, especially for younger women seeking more personal, spiritual meaning during the season (p. 87). So, while Damas reinforces cultural roots, L'azurde reinterprets them. Both use culture, but in different ways—one by preserving, the other by evolving.

Together, these three theories (CLT, Brand Archetypes, and Cultural Branding) help explain how L'azurde and Damas speak to different emotional needs, psychological preferences, and cultural expectations. Their ads aren't just pretty—they're doing deeper work, shaping how people relate to luxury, identity, and tradition during one of the most emotionally significant times of the year.

6. Analysis and Findings

To understand how these two brands connect with their audiences, we first need to look at who they're speaking to. L'azurde mainly targets women between the ages of 20 and 35, living in cities across the Gulf and the Levant. Its strategic direction clearly reflects its focus on a younger, modern demographic. As CEO Selim Chidiac stated in an interview with Chidiac [15]. "We are focusing on younger customers who are looking for more affordable pieces that still reflect elegance and individuality." This statement supports the brand's efforts to appeal to women aged 20–35, particularly in urban areas across the GCC and Levant, who are drawn to minimalist aesthetics, personal spirituality, and luxury as a form of self-expression rather than social display.

In contrast, Damas's campaigns appeal to an older, more traditional audience. Its long-standing use of family-based storytelling, ceremonial gifting, and heritage symbolism strongly suggests a target demographic of women aged 35 and older who value emotional continuity, legacy, and cultural rituals in their purchasing decisions. These women are often university-educated, career-minded, and influenced by both Arab traditions and global trends. Psychographically, they care about inner growth, personal style, and quiet spirituality—especially during Ramadan, a time when reflection and emotional clarity are top of mind. Trope and Liberman [12] notes that younger consumers in the region increasingly gravitate toward brands that support personal identity and emotional self-expression during culturally significant periods. Jewelry, for them, isn't just a personal accessory; it's a marker of social roles, family rituals, and intergenerational connection. They align closely with the Caregiver and Ruler archetypes described by Mark and Pearson [13] where tradition, protection, and social order are central themes. This group is drawn to emotionally rich, visually elaborate storytelling that mirrors shared cultural values.

6.1. L'azurde: "Follow the Moon" Campaign Middle East [16]

This campaign is visually minimal but emotionally deep. A single woman stands bathed in moonlight, her jewelry glowing softly as she moves through quiet spaces. There are no spoken lines, no family scenes, no crowded iftar tables—just stillness, reflection, and beauty. This fits perfectly with what Trope and Liberman [12] describe as high-level construals: abstract, emotionally distant, and focused on inner meaning (p. 440–442). The moon becomes a symbol of spiritual guidance; the quiet setting encourages viewers to find meaning in solitude. The goal here is not to tell a story, but to offer a feeling. As Trope and Liberman [12] explain, when people think abstractly, they're focused on "why" something matters rather than "how" it happens (2010, p. 443). L'azurde uses this to its advantage: the jewelry isn't just shown—it's felt. The visuals ask viewers to consider what the pieces symbolize—faith, personal light, and emotional clarity, rather than how or when they'd wear them. This campaign also strongly reflects the Creator archetype. Mark and Pearson [13] describe Creator brands as imaginative and emotionally expressive, aiming to help people make something meaningful out of their choices (p. 84–85). L'azurde doesn't offer a ready-made story; it gives space for women to see themselves and define what the jewelry means for them. Culturally, the campaign functions as what Holt [14] would call a personal myth: a way to make sense of one's identity in relation to larger social expectations (p. 55). By using crescent moons and Arabic script in subtle ways, the campaign still acknowledges tradition, but it reframes it through a modern, individual lens. This lets younger audiences hold on to their cultural roots while engaging with them in a way that feels more personal and relevant.

6.2. L'azurde: "Your Light Within" Campaign Middle East [16]

This campaign follows a similar approach but leans more into symbolic design. Arabic calligraphy, floral geometry, and soft gold tones appear throughout, paired with isolated jewelry shots and slow, ambient music. Once again, we see high-level construal in action: the ad isn't direct or explanatory, but it also invites introspection. There's no translation of calligraphy and no narrative arc to follow. Viewers are trusted to interpret it on their own. This gives the ad a quiet power. Holt [14] would see this as cultural branding through myth-making, not about reinforcing traditional roles, but about offering a new story of identity that balances faith with individual expression (p. 74–87). The jewelry isn't worn for show, but it's a reflection of who you are on the inside. That's a message that fits perfectly with the younger, spiritually inclined women L'azurde aims to reach.

6.3. Damas: "Beauty of Giving" Campaign Middle East [16]

This campaign is all about emotion and tradition. A young woman visits her grandmother, who opens a keepsake box and gifts her a necklace. The setting is rich with Ramadan cues: date fruits, henna, ornate lanterns, and multigenerational togetherness. The emotion is immediate and specific, known as low-level construal, as Trope and Liberman [12] would say (p. 443). Every detail, from facial expressions to décor, feels intimate and grounded. From a branding perspective, Damas is drawing on both the Caregiver and Ruler archetypes. The grandmother offers warmth and guidance, while the brand positions itself as a guardian of cultural heritage and emotional security [13]. This makes the jewelry feel not just beautiful, but sacred, something passed down with love and meaning. Holt [14] theory of mythic reinforcement also applies here. The ad tells a story that calms cultural anxieties—about change, about losing touch with tradition—by showing that some things, like family rituals, remain stable. Jewelry becomes part of that ritual, a marker of belonging.

6.4. Damas: "Mother's Blessing" Campaign Middle East [16]

Another powerful example is this campaign featuring a young bride preparing for her engagement night. Her mother helps her get ready and gives her a gold set as a blessing. The music intensifies, the camera lingers, and emotions feel everywhere. This campaign doesn't ask the viewer to interpret anything because it tells a clear story: tradition matters, and jewelry is a big part of it. Again, this is classic low-level construal: concrete visuals, emotionally rich moments, and full immersion in a cultural scene [12]. The Ruler archetype is especially strong here since the mother is not just a parent; she's a symbol of grace, wisdom, and continuity. The jewelry represents responsibility, love, and the next chapter in life. Holt [14] would say this campaign works by offering a reassuring cultural myth that even in the fast-changing world, Damas's ads are still here and its audience is still part of something bigger.

These campaigns show how L'azurde and Damas communicate very different versions of luxury. L'azurde invites women into a personal, spiritual space where jewelry is quiet and symbolic. Damas brings viewers into familiar, emotional scenes where jewelry is a bridge between generations. Both brands succeed, but for different reasons. One speaks to the inner self, the other to collective memory. One is about who you are, the other about where you come from.

7. Conclusion

L'azurde and Damas aren't just selling jewelry, they're telling two very different stories about what luxury means, especially during Ramadan. L'azurde speaks to a younger, more modern audience that values quiet spirituality, personal meaning, and emotional clarity. Damas, meanwhile, leans into tradition, family, and shared experience. Both approaches work, but they work for different target audiences and in different ways. L'azurde's minimalist campaigns use high-level construals [12] the Creator archetype [13] and cultural innovation [14] to connect with consumers who are looking for a deeper kind of luxury and something tied to self-expression and inner values. Even when it uses traditional Islamic symbols, it does so gently and symbolically, allowing viewers to interpret and relate in their own way. Damas takes a very different path. Its ads are rich, emotional, and grounded in everyday family rituals. They use low-level construals, familiar archetypes like the Caregiver and Ruler, and a cultural branding strategy that reinforces stability and belonging. Jewelry in Damas campaigns isn't just a fashion statement but a marker of memory, identity, and emotional legacy. What both brands do brilliantly is use visual language as a kind of emotional code. L'azurde uses moonlight, space, and symbolic elements to suggest introspection and spiritual refinement. Damas uses crowded family scenes, gift-giving, and rich textures to create warmth, connection, and cultural continuity. Ramadan, in both cases, becomes less of a backdrop and more of the emotional amplifier that helps these messages be delivered to their appropriate audience. On a broader sphere, this study shows that luxury branding, especially in the Middle East, isn't just about glamor or price. It's about emotional alignment. It's about understanding how people think, feel, and process meaning, particularly during deeply personal moments like Ramadan. Both L'azurde and Damas understand this, which is why their different styles resonate so strongly with their audiences. From a marketing point of view, Damas and L'azurde show how knowing your audience goes beyond age and income. It's about emotional habits and cultural orientation. Some people want to be seen and remembered; others want to feel understood and centered. A successful brand has to decide: Are you telling a story of legacy and tradition, or a story of self? Looking even more broadly, this analysis can be applied well beyond Ramadan or jewelry. In a broader scope, luxury brands worldwide need to rethink their assumptions about what luxury means. As demonstrated here, luxury is not defined by material excess or price but is increasingly shaped by emotional resonance, symbolic alignment, and narrative clarity. Brands that thrive are those that understand that luxury is experienced through the consumer's lens, shaped by their values, cultural norms, and internal narratives. Whether rooted in tradition or minimalism, luxury must be lived, not just worn.

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