

Factors Affecting Purchase Intention for Luxury Fashion Goods

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ABSTRACT - The focus of the research is to investigate the underlying factors that influence purchasing intentions for high-end fashion items. The laddering technique and the means-end chain (MEC) analysis were used in data collecting as part of qualitative study. Consumers buy luxury fashion goods mostly to complement their lifestyle, thereby gratifying their inner impulses, according to the findings. The data collection and analysis resulted in a hierarchical value map that shows that self-confidence and self-fulfillment are the key hidden end values while buying and consuming luxury products. Implications for marketers include product customization, brand value and Consumers seek subjective and self-rewarding consumption. The paper's contribution is based on the investigation of latent determinants of purchase intention for fashion luxury products using the laddering technique and means-end chain (MEC) analysis. Furthermore, the article looks at this problem in the context of the Indian market, which is an excellent example of an immensely growing market for fashion luxury goods.

KEYWORDS - Branding, Buying Behavior, Fashion, Lifestyle, Luxury and Quality.

I. INTRODUCTION

The luxury goods market grew on a worldwide scale during the period from 1995 to 2007. More specifically, the Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) was 11 per cent during the period between 1995 and 1999 (the period of the luxury industry boom), 1 per cent during the three-year period from 2000-2003 (the consolidation of the luxury industry) and 8 per cent between 2004 and 2007 (the expansion of the luxury industry into emerging markets) (Bain, 2017). The two main factors which accelerated development in this sector were principally: the economic growth in Southeast Asia (Vigneron, 2014), which created "the new rich" and the increase in the use of those products defined as new luxury (Silverstein, 2014). However, it is to be noted that in 2020 the worldwide luxury goods market suffered the effects of the worldwide economic slowdown: taking into consideration the results at current exchange rates of listed companies, total sales volume declined by 2 per cent in comparison with 2012 (Bain, 2017).

Four main categories of luxury goods can be identified: fashion (couture, ready-to-wear and accessories), perfumes and cosmetics, wines, and spirits, watches, and jewelry (Jackson, 2004). Recently other categories were added: luxury automobile hotels, tourism, private banking, home furnishing and airlines (Chevalier, 2014). Fashion luxury goods are comprised of apparel, accessories, handbags, shoes, watches, jewelry, and perfume, for which just the mere use or display of a particular brand brings prestige to the owner, and functional utility becomes a side issue (Vigneron, 2014). Other studies analyzed the luxury market from the point of view of marketing

management (Vickers, 2013) and the role of the brand for the consumption of luxury goods (Fionda, 2009). However, a study of the literature revealed that no research has been done on the examination of factors of purchase intention for fashion luxury products using the Means end chain (MEC) model (Gutman, 1982) and the laddering technique (Reynolds, 1988). As a result, such research approaches were used to explore this topic to fill a vacuum in the literature. Furthermore, unlike prior research on the same topics, this investigation was conducted in India, which provides a significant context for the topic's examination. Indeed, the methodology was applied to Indian consumers which represent a relevant mature market for fashion luxury goods, both in terms of production and consumption (Altgamma, 2015).

II. THE DIVISION OF LUXURY CONSUMPTION

The concept of luxury is difficult to define because it represents a social context (Nueno, 2008) which follows cultural evolution. Thus, it is changeable and extremely subjective (Phau, 2000). However, the review of the literature reveals two primary groups of causes for luxury goods consumption: on the one hand, social and interpersonal exterior motives; and on the other hand, subjective and guarded internal motivations. Internal motivations (self-reward) relate to luxury consumption based on emotions, state of mind, and subjective sensations related to an individual's self-perception, whereas external motivations (signal wealth) concern cases where the goal is essentially that of publicly displaying luxury in order to affirm the consumer's status, whereas external motivations (signal wealth) concern cases where

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In the first case, luxury is typically consumed for reasons related to ostentation, social positioning, and status symbol accumulation (Truong, 2018). In the second case, consumption involves more personal or cultural goals, related to the search for pleasure, originality, and perfection (Dubois, 2003). Consumers can "externalize" luxury to demonstrate how much they paid, to copy those they respect, or to satisfy a competitive mentality; they buy things based on shared codes. Consumers can "internalize" luxury if they are motivated by aesthetic pleasures, cultural or personal sensitivities to specific values; they select things based on their preferences. Internalized luxury could be linked to concepts like self-directed pleasure, self-gifting, and internal self-congruency. Although purchasing goals based on "others" (externalized luxury) and purchasing intents based on individual style and subjectivity (internalized luxury) are diametrically opposed, they may coexist with a single buyer (Tsai, 2015).

III. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on applying the laddering technique (Reynolds, 1988) and Means-End Chain (MEC) analysis (Gutman, 1982) to a new topic: Factors affecting purchase intention for luxury products. MEC is defined as "a model that seeks to explain how a product or service selection facilitates the achievement of desired end states" (Gutman, 1982). It is based on the elicitation of constructs and has been widely used in marketing research, particularly for retail marketing, advertising, product development and branding (Wagner, 2017). Product attributes imply "the ability of the product to provide benefits for the consumer"; consequences may be defined as "any result (physiological or psychological) accruing directly or indirectly to the consumer (sooner or later) from his/her behavior"; ends are "valued states of being such as happiness, security, accomplishment" (Gutman, 1982). The MEC model assumes that the product's attributes are the means which allow the consumer, thanks to the promised benefits (or consequences), to reach his specific personal ends (McIntosh, 2005). The MEC model moves from the more concrete level of attributes to a more abstract level which represents the consumer's personal hopes and values (Klenosky, 2013).

Effects	Perception	Motivation	Behavior
Interpersonal	Social, Conspicuous and Unique Values	Ostentation, non-Conformity and Conformity Values	Veblenian, Snob and Bandwagon
Personal	Emotional and Quality Values	Self-Actualization and Reassurance	Hedonist and Perfectionism

Table 1: Ends Sought in the use of Luxury Products

According to the means end chain analysis the basic

"why?" questions were continuously asked to find the root cause of the deriving force behind purchase intentions. This methodology attempts to model the individuals' belief structure in a simple and systematic way while investigating personal values (Nunkoo, 2009). It is widely used in marketing to reveal consumers' latent cognitive structures, that is, those hierarchical constructs which are not immediately clear (Lin, 2002). The classic laddering approach was used in this study, and it has the advantage of facilitating thoughts on personal purchase motivations as well as the relationship between "attributes-consequences-ends." The approach of asking "why" questions repeatedly is used: each customer is guided down a ladder, correlating his reasons and their consequences with product attributes until he finally reveals the values associated with his choices. The laddering technique enables researchers to better grasp the link and connections between luxury goods features and consumer aspirations. Unspoken personal values were evoked by leveraging luxury brand product features. Every interview followed the same broad framework of the means-end chain: Characteristics connected with a high-end brand Meanings of these qualities and their ramifications for the customer. The importance of such outcomes for the client and personal goals.

A content analysis was carried out on protocols and the constructs elicited were ordered according to their level of abstraction:

- Concrete attributes
- Abstract attributes
- Functional consequences
- Psychological consequences
- Functional ends
- Terminal ends (Olson, 1983)

The data was collected in India with local luxury consumers. This country as the geographical context of inquiry, appears to be relevant both in terms of fashion production and fashion consumption (Altagamma, 2015). The area we choose helps us to have a better understanding of a mature market for stylish premium items. Differences between luxury purchase intentions in mature markets (e.g., India, France) and emerging markets (e.g., Russia, India, China) have been documented in the literature: some studies point out that Eastern consumers purchase luxury goods mainly to display their wealth, while Western consumers buy them especially to be consistent with their individual styles (Company, 2009).

In-depth interviews with a group of 40 Indian consumers were done in a multi-brand supermarket in the heart of Delhi, India. The shop specializes on men's and women's luxury clothing, accessories, and small leather items (Versace, Gucci, Fendi, Armani, and others) and has an annual turnover of over one million Inr. It has a loyal

following of locals from all around southern India. Because the store's entire clientele was equally split between men and women, the judgmental sample included 20 men and 20 women. Over a four-month period, a single researcher conducted interviews at the store. The researcher chose participants based on how loyal they were to a certain store: All the participants had shopped in this store for at least ten years and spent at least 100,000 Inr in the preceding year. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher had no prior knowledge of the subjects. The recordings of all 40 interviews were then transcribed into protocols. Each interview lasted 56 minutes on average. The 40 subjects were given a short questionnaire to complete in the store at the end of each interview to obtain socio-demographic data from the sample group (see Table II). The sample's detailed features can be summarized as follows: 52.5 percent of the participants were unmarried. Most subjects (55%) were between the ages of 31 and 40 and had a university degree. (15%) were single and

37.5 percent were in a relationship, and 67.5 percent were childless (77.5 per cent). The most common net personal income group (32.5%) was between 50,001 and 75,000 Inr, and the bulk of the subjects were self-employed professionals or freelancers. The opening inquiries were straightforward: "Why is this quality essential to you?" The laddering technique was used for each of the three traits that each participant had initially picked. As a result, when the ladder soliciting for the first characteristic was deemed complete, the same set of questions were asked for the second and third attributes. The laddering technique was utilized after the data collection stage for the following purposes:

- Content analysis and data quantization
- luxury hierarchical value map (LHVM) development
- findings and interpretation

OBSERVED DATA	OPTIONS	PERCENTAGE
Gender	MALE	50
	FEMALE	50
Marital status	SINGLE	15
	RELATIONSHIP	37.5
	MARRIED	47.5
AGE	21-30	25
	31-40	55
	41-50	15
EDUCATION	UNIVERSITY DEGREE	77.5
	SCHOOL DIPLOMA	22.5
CHILDREN	WITH CHILDREN	32.5
	NO CHILDREN	67.5

INCOME (INR pm)	≥25,000	5
	25,001-50,000	22.5
	50,001-75,000	32.5
	75,001-100,000	17.5
	100,001-150,000	2.5

Table 2: Socio-Demographic description of the group

IV. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

The assessment of all answers and dialogues that the participants described was used to conduct data analysis (after the transcription). Please note that: a- "Divorced" or "Widowed"; b- "Younger than 21" or "Older than 60"; c- "Neither university degree nor L./U. school diploma"; n = 40. The research yielded 45 components in total: 21 qualities (11 concrete and 10 abstract), 12 repercussions (one functional and 11 psychological), and 12 values (four instrumental and eight terminal). The constructions were categorized and divided into distinct groups. The various constructions obtained and dispersed throughout the six levels and sub-levels of abstraction, respectively. The features, repercussions, and values that arose in response to the acquisition of luxury goods were discussed. It should be noted that there is a code in parentheses at the conclusion of every statement extracted from the interview records and recounted in the following paragraphs that specifies the sex. (M = Male; F = Female), marital status (S = Single; IR = In a relationship; M = Married) and age bracket (1 = 31-40; 2 = 41-50; 3 = 51-60) of the subject. Consumers emphasized factors linked to quality, craftsmanship, design, and aesthetic value when expressing attributes associated to luxury goods. The interviews revealed a concept of luxury that is linked to culture and creative sensibility. The preference for concrete traits over abstract ones, not only in terms of numbers but also in terms of centrality, is noteworthy. Among the qualities mentioned, "quality" is one that is frequently linked with high-end goods. Craftsmanship is seen by consumers as a vital feature of premium items. Craftsmanship is associated with the passage of time and the specialized labour required to create a valuable thing, a symbol of tradition passed down from generation to generation and the result of manual know-how. Another term used to characterize luxury goods is "innovation" in terms of quality, with careful material selection and artistic expression. The characteristic of "design," which characterizes top-quality products; purchased for the elegance of shape and style, is closely related to "innovation." Other more abstract characteristics that the subject's thought was significant in identifying luxury items were "beauty," "creativity," "refinement," and "elegance," all of which are associated with luxury goods. In terms of the conclusions of the emphasized traits, there was a definite preference for psychological repercussions over functional implications. The psychological challenges

that consumers face when purchasing and using luxury products appear to be intimately linked. From the material or tangible nature of the traits to the intangibility or experiential aspects of their impacts, there is a transition. The single functional consequence documented in the analysis of this documentation is related to the product's time length, which is recognized as the result of quality and manufacturing attributes. At least according to the respondents examined, the quality of luxury is also recognized and described in terms of "personality." Luxury allows customers to stand out, not only because they want to stand out, but also because they do not have to comply to aesthetic conventions. The subjects believe they are better able to express their own personalities, identities, and personal styles because of this. For the customer, luxury entails a sense of security and self-assurance. The emotional influence of purchasing and using luxury items is characterized by the experience. A few notions expressed by the subjects about the repercussions were coded with the construct "guarantee" (meaning, primarily, "quality assurance") and the subsequent "lack of sorrow" through an examination of the protocols. The product's workmanship is seen as a form of assurance in terms of quality, durability, and beauty; as a result, the consumer can be confident that he is purchasing a valuable item. He is also reassured by what can be characterized as ethical terms, and he does not regret having purchased an extremely expensive object as a psychological result.

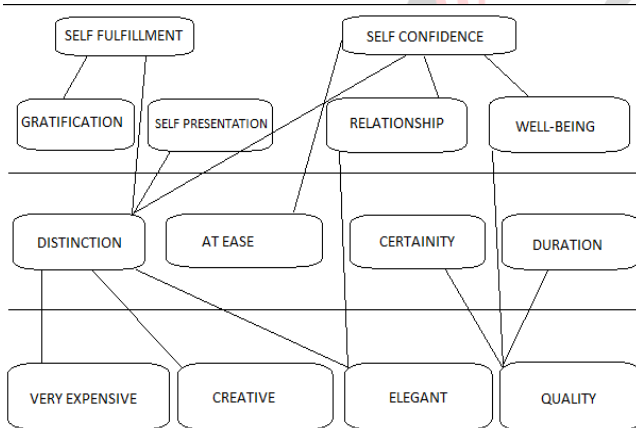


Figure 1: Luxury Hierarchical Value Map

Luxury, according to the topic, is first and foremost a pleasure, a self-referential pleasure, a personal pleasure. These customers purchase luxury goods just for themselves, for personal needs or desires, rather than for "another person" or for a "external" goal. These consumers can communicate something about themselves, their personalities, and their lifestyles through luxury products. This strengthens and satisfies their interpersonal interactions. Consumers describe the buying and usage of fashion products as a manner of taking care of themselves, as a form of respect, and as a way of giving priority to oneself. The findings emphasize the importance of "self-confidence," which is the key endpoint value. Inquiring into

the minds of these customers found that the ultimate incentive for their purchases is psychological states of mind associated with "self-confidence," which is achieved through the acquisition and use of luxury products that are congruent with their personalities. Finally, personal values such as "self-fulfillment" and "self-esteem" are significant. Other constructions relating to the extrapolated final values from the interviews likewise take us back to the personal issue of "feeling good about oneself," feeling happy and free and, hence leading a better life. There were no motivating incentives for externalized luxury or ostentation among the terminal values highlighted, at least not yet. Internalized luxury is the focus of the final values produced in the interviews (self-confidence, personal fulfillment, etc.).

The results of the means-end chain trace the relationships between the specified constructs by linking perceived fashion luxury product features to values. The study backs up the idea that people buy luxury goods for both internal and exterior reasons and draws attention to a value map that can be traced back to internalized luxury. The cognitive map of luxury, also known as the luxury hierarchical value map (LHVM), displays the results of the obtained and codified processing data. A few times, references are made to constructs that are not shown on the map but were investigated in the study. The total number of ladders acquired from the in-depth interviews is 119, with an average of 2.98 ladders for each interview. Only 13% of the people polled thought "high price" was an important factor in describing a luxury item. The trait most usually linked with the luxury fashion goods is "high quality," as noted by 68% of the respondents. The role of "duration" in time (indicated by 48% of those polled) is particularly significant to these customers. In fact, it is highlighted on the map as one of the most significant correlations discovered in this study. The relationship between quality and "assurance" in terms of guarantee (for over 20% of the sample group) is the other significant association; a hand-crafted product is assured to be well-made. For 38% of these customers, a luxury product is a "elegant" product. In luxury goods, the aesthetic component plays a vital role, with direct and wide-ranging consequences on the individual's psychology. For 23% of the respondents, luxury products also signify "creativity". As a direct result of these characteristics, there is "distinction," which is defined as the ability to convey ideas and ideals. To conclude, these customers linked four key outcomes to luxury fashion product attributes: the ability to "distinct themselves," the product's "duration in time," the ability to feel "at ease," and the "confidence" of owning a good product. Specifically, 65% of the participants purchase luxury goods to "identify themselves": not so much to feel superior or to be noticed or to show off, but rather to be able to acquire objects that reflect their personalities and unique styles. Furthermore, the elegance of a luxury goods is closely linked to the

concept of distinctiveness. About one out of every three consumers (35 percent of the sample group) emphasized the ability to feel "at ease" and "well-being". These outcomes are the result of characteristics associated with luxury goods, such as smart, exclusive, and elegant. In this hierarchy, the final consequence of importance is "assurance," or the assurance of having made a good purchase. This consequence is quality and time length in the thoughts of these clients. The higher level of the mental map for luxury products is made up of values, which are split into "instrumental" and "terminal" categories. For the group investigated, "gratification," "self-communication," and "relationships with others" were all equally important terminal values. When it comes to buying and utilizing luxury goods, over half of buyers look for these values. Luxury items are purchased because they provide "personal fulfilment." The ability to communicate one's individuality is linked to the ability to feel at ease and experience powerful emotions when using luxury items. The ability to improve one's "relationships with others" is inextricably linked to the attribute of "elegance." One-third of the consumers polled valued "feeling good," both physically and emotionally. The map shows that there is a direct attribute-value association in this situation as well; the value associated with well-being is closely tied to "quality." The value "self-confidence" is linked to the highest number of instrumental values and effects. This research reveals a value map that may be linked back to internalized luxury. Confidence's final value denotes a totally personal and subjective conclusion.

V. CONCLUSION

With the increase in number of affluents, the importance of luxury market is growing. The basic characteristics of the luxury consumers is very different from others and luxury brands work on marketing principles so different from others that they are called anti-laws of marketing. Indian luxury market started growing rapidly at the advent of the past decade. Luxury brands which were primarily limited to hotel lobbies, started moving out to a variety of locations such as high-end malls, airports, and high street shopping areas. On one hand luxury brands became more visible, and on the other the luxury consumers became more aware. As the luxury market is growing, so are the luxury customers. Opening of the economy, rise in disposable incomes and emergence of middle class clearly indicates the potential of the Indian market. This research was focused on study of factors affecting the consumer buying behavior of Indian luxury consumers with reference to fashion goods. In course of achieving this objective first the important buying attributes were identified. Further, the relative weightage of important attributes to the overall purchase intention of luxury consumers was also established. To understand the varied profiles of customers and their buying attribute preferences for luxury goods, a system was established to identify distinct consumer segments based on the

preferences of buying attributes in the luxury market. Later in the study several buying attribute combinations were analyzed, and the most preferred attribute combination was determined based on preferences of luxury consumers. In this study the relation of independent variables including demographics was also studied with respect to buying attribute preferences. The dependency of preferences of luxury consumers on various demographic factors like income, age, gender, etc. Was studied and various tests were carried out to see if any significant differences exist between preferences of luxury consumers across various groups based on demographic profile.

In the research study several important observations of significant marketing consequences were concluded regarding the Indian luxury market. Personalized service such as, made to measure was an extremely important parameter when it came to shaping purchase intention of the luxury consumers. Variables such as comfort, speedy checkout, seating facility and whether consumers will spend more time in stores with trendy merchandise was established to be dependent on the age of the respondents. Preference for variables such as color options, quality, made to measure, home delivery and alteration facility varied with variance in income of the customers. Some expected observations were also made like price sensitivity did not vary with income groups for the luxury consumers; most of the luxury consumers considered price as an insignificant factor for purchase whereas self-fulfillment and self-rewarding behavior proved out to be a significant factor for purchasing luxury goods. Three important classifications of consumers came across, those who gave prominence to personalization, those who were oriented towards product characteristics and those motivated by experience. It was concluded that luxury consumers chose to purchase from malls; they preferred wide assortment and customized services.

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