LUXURY FASHION CONSUMPTION AMONG TEENAGERS: ATTITUDE AND PURCHASE INTENT

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Abstract

Luxury fashion goods comprise those items that are desirable but not essential for consumers. Despite this restrictive description, the luxury choice is bringing more and more costumers all over the world for various reasons.

The present research investigates several agents that influence teenagers' approach toward acquiring of luxury fashion items and also their purchase intention. The data was gathered from teenagers involved in the Romanian education system, a total of 350 responses being registered. To the gathered data was applied exploratory factor analysis, supported by confirmatory factor analysis. Using the structural equation model there was revealed a negative impact of materialism on attitude towards acquiring fashion goods among teenagers. Also, teenagers purchasing intention for luxury items was positively influenced by their attitude toward acquiring luxury fashion items. In the final, there were discussed assumptions of the present study. Limits and directions for future research were exposed.

Keywords

Luxury Fashion Goods; Fashion Industry; Consumer Behavior; Attitude; Exploratory Factor Analysis; Structural Equation Model;

JEL Classification

C12; C38; L67; O11

Introduction

Luxury fashion items represent a broad category that comprises clothes, shoes and accessories that bring prestige to their owners despite any functionality.

Consumption was classified into four categories: necessary – comprising those items used for life-sustaining, basic – encompass items for progress and prosperity, affluence goods and luxury goods (Smith, 1776). The last category, luxury, is characterised by a limited supply, rarity and a higher price.

Acquiring luxury goods is perceived as a sign of social position and wealth, while the higher price intensifies the importance of this indicator. It was highlighted that luxury plays a vital role in building social stratification (Kepferer and Bastien, 2009; Nelissen and Meijers, 2010; Dion and Borraz, 2017;). In this respect, individuals admit luxury as an imperative element to establish themselves as characters from the social category that they wish to belong.

In this regard, consumers are more inclined to pay considerable price differences for luxury brands, since those goods present an exclusive series of features such as a high quality, reputation, recognisability and exclusivity. The present study intends to recognise the principal agents that influence the teenager's approach towards purchasing luxury fashion goods and to examine the influence of teens attitude on purchasing intention of luxury fashion items.

After an extensive literature revision of previous analysis conducted on luxury items, there were considered five essential indicators that influence people attitude and their purchase strategy toward luxury fashion items, factors such as brand consciousness, fashion innovativeness, fashion involvement, materialism and social comparison,

Brand consciousness is determined by people irrational bias toward famous brand fashion items. Often, consumers realize a confusion among price, quality and brand name, considering famous brand names as being a symbol of quality (Husic and Cicic, 2009). Individuals who are in a continuous search of social status confirmation are more prone to pay a higher price for those items because the price is identified as a barometer of those items quality (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000).

Individuals that experience a high level of brand consciousness noticed that brands offer social status and fame. As a consequence, consumers are more inclined to buy luxuries and renowned brands (Liao and Wang, 2009), the brand name being one of the essential variables concerning luxury items shopping.

Materialism represents the importance that an individual assigns to "worldly properties" (Belk, 1984) and it is characterised as an aggregation of related features, values and attitudes that concentrates on ownership, as well as an appropriate design in selecting items. Also, materialism expresses several attitudes that recognise ownership as a symbol of success, considering that more properties lead to a higher level of happiness (Chan and Prendergast, 2007). Materialism is studied considering three perspectives: the importance of ownership, the role of those acquisitions in obtaining an appropriate level of satisfaction and the role of ownership in determining individuals prosperity (Richins and Dawson, 1992).

Social comparison theory assumes that individuals tend to compare themselves with others to assess and to approve their behaviour and their social status. Individuals aspire to own luxury items to impress their networks with the social status gained by the property of those luxury goods. People that belong to the middle class tend to acquire a slight amount of luxury items to be approved by the wealthier classes (Hucis and Cicic, 2009).

Innovativeness refers to the willingness manifested by an individual to accept novel ideas, products and services, comparable in time of acceptance with other people that belong to the same social system (Rogers, 1995). Fashion innovativeness characterises those people that are in a continuous search to distinguish themselves by searching for novel and distinct methods to maintain their state of innovators, while fashion followers adopt a reproduction role (Beaudoin and Lachance, 2006). Fashion innovators manifest a greater need for uniqueness, they tend to be more socially mobile and to adopt a more favourable attitude toward risky situations.

Involvement describes the degree to which a person recognises an appropriate purchase decision as being essential for himself. Consumer's preferences for luxuries are intimately conditioned on their level of engagement (Deeter-Schmelz et al., 2000). Previous research showed that a consumer's attitude toward brands is influenced by their level of involvement.

The theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) established an existing relationship between attitudes and the actual behaviour of individuals. According to this model, the actual behaviour of individuals is determined by their behavioural intention to achieve a distinct task. Several empirical studies revealed a positive relationship among a positive attitude toward the acquisition of luxury items and the consumers' actual purchase intent (Zhang and Kim, 2013). Based on the literature review earlier exposed, there were formulated the following hypothesis:

1. Brand consciousness, materialism, social comparison, fashion innovativeness and fashion involvement exhibits a positive effect on the attitude towards purchasing luxury fashion articles among teenagers.

2. Attitude regarding the acquisition of luxury fashion items is affecting positively the shopping intention of luxury fashion items among teenagers.

Methodology
The instrument, sample, data collection and method of analysis
The methodology, implemented in this article, it is based on a questionnaire that aims to measure seven latent variables like, brand consciousness (Sproles and Kendall, 1986; Tai and Tam, 1997), fashion innovativeness (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991), fashion involvement (Chae et al., 2006), attitude toward buying luxury fashion items (Park et al.,2007), materialism (Wong et al., 2003), social comparison (Chan and Prendergast's, 2007), and the purchase intent of luxury fashion items (Summeres et al, 2006). The survey was originally formulated in English and then was transposed in Romanian. All dimensions were measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree), the questionnaire was applied to students enrolled in public Romanian universities, aged between 18-35 years. A total of 350 responses was registered: 286 were women (81.2%), and 66 were men (18.8%). Also, 209 (59.4%) respondents were employed, while 143 (40.6%) were not employed. Concerning the monthly net income of the respondents, 41.8% of them earn less than 1000 lei, while only 6.8 of them earn more than 5000 lei. Concerning the frequency of purchasing luxury items in the latest six months, 45.2% of respondents stated that they did not buy any luxury items, 38.6% of respondents bought among 1 and 3 items, while only 3.7% bought more than 10 items. Concerning the amount paid on those purchases, 73.00% of respondents spend less than 500 lei, 22.7% spend among 500-1000 lei, while only 0.9% spend among 2500 and 3000 lei.

To the collected data was applied exploratory factor analysis, supported by confirmatory factor analysis and a structural equation model, all of them carried in the R Statistical Software. The first step, in the exploratory analysis, was to manage a graphical illustration of the correlation existed between studied items (fig. no. 1). Most of the correlations are encountered in the interval 0.3-0.7, excepting some items that record a score below 0.3, but the deviation is not significant to eliminate them from the analysis. Also, some variables correlate negatively.

The null hypothesis of Bartlett's test of sphericity test states that the correlation matrix is not different from the identity matrix, meaning that there are no significant correlations among our observed variables. The registered score of the p-value (<2.2e-16) permits to reject the null hypothesis and to perform the exploratory factor analysis. Also, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Statistics registers a level of our index of factorial simplicity of 0.86, a "meritorious" score (Kaiser, 1974).

To find the right number of factor for the exploratory analysis was conducted a scree plot, where graphical representation suggests that seven factors were recommended (fig. no. 2).
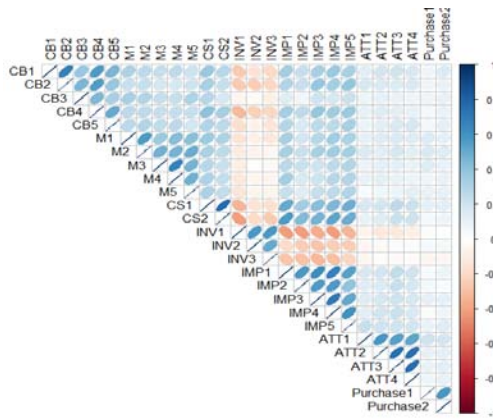
Fig. no. 1 Graphical Representation of Correlations between Items
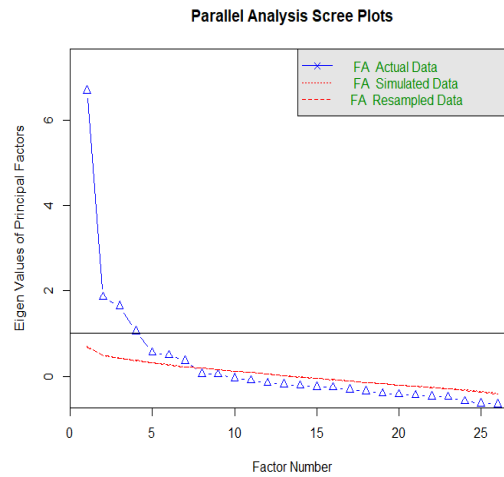
Source: Author's calculus.

Fig. no. 2 Parallel Analysis Scree Plot

Source: Author's calculus.

For the exploratory factor analysis was used as factoring method the weighted least squares and oblimin rotation. In terms of adequacy tests, we have the root mean square of the residuals (RMSR = 0.2) and the root mean of squared error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.041), both recording scores lower than the 0.08 cut-off. The Tucker-Lewis index of factoring reliability is encountering a value of 0.952, the recommended cut-off being 0.95.

In terms of factor loadings, all registered scores are higher than 0.4. In terms of uniqueness recognised as the residual variance of our observed variables or the part that couldn't be explained by the studied dimensions, registers pretty low scores ranged between 0.080 and 0.671.

The obtained dimensions were checked for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha metric, the scores being registered in brackets: brand consciousness (α=0.81), materialism (α=0.82), social comparison (α=0.86), fashion innovativeness (α=0.79), fashion involvement (α=0.87), attitude (α=0.79) and purchase intention (α=0.73).

Further to handled confirmatory factor analysis, there were checked all variables for normality. As can be seen, in general, variables follow a normal distribution, the variation manifested by some variables not being so severe to exclude them from the analysis (fig. no. 3). The confirmatory analysis was run using *the lavaan* package (Yves, 2012) that converged normally after 38 iterations.
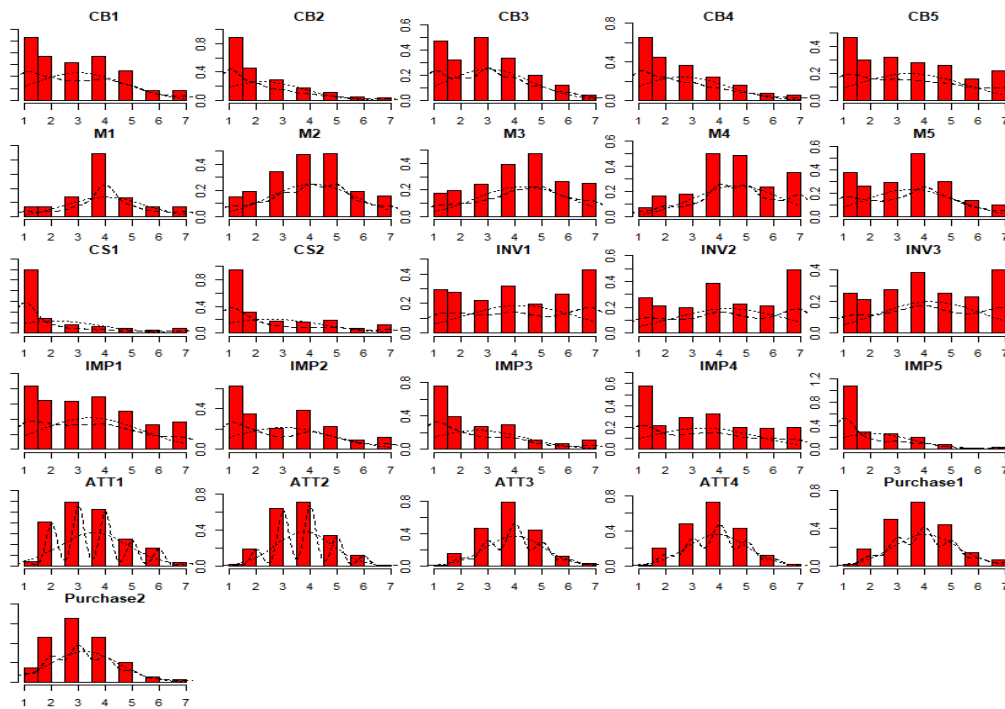
Fig. no. 3. Variables Normality Distribution
Source: Autor's calculus.

To perform the confirmatory factor analysis was used the maximum likelihood estimator.
To diagnose the specified model we have the fit indices, Tucker-Lewis (TLI = 0.942) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.950) that register scores closer to the threshold of 0.95. Also, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.046) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.045) register values below the 0.080 threshold.
The Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI = 0.968) registers a value above the 0.90 threshold and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0. 976) is above the 0.95 threshold.
In the last step of the analysis, it was desired to investigate the relationship between brand consciousness, materialism, social comparison, fashion innovativeness and fashion involvement in determining teenagers attitude toward luxury fashion items. Also, to examine if the attitude positively affects their decision to purchase luxury fashion items.

Table no. 1 Regressions in the Structural Equation Model

Direct Effects	Estimate	Standard Error	z-value	P-value	Std.all
Attitude ~ Fashion Involvement	0.214	0.114	1.868	0.062	0.201
Attitude ~ Materialism	-0.023	0.083	-0.271	0.786	-0.021
Attitude ~ Brand Consciousness	0.104	0.083	1.247	0.213	0.097
Attitude ~ Fashion Involvement	0.103	0.085	1.220	0.222	0.097
Attitude ~ Social Comparison	0.121	0.098	1.235	0.217	0.113
Attitude ~ Purchase Intention	0.122	0.069	1.757	0.079	0.115

Source: Author's calculus.

As it can be observed from the previous table (table no. 1), all examined dimensions exhibit a decisive impact on the teenager's attitude toward buying of fashion luxury items, excepting

materialism that manifests a negative influence on the attitude of teenagers, but the relationship is not statistically significant. On the other hand, the purchase intention of teenagers is positively affected by their attitude toward fashion luxury items, but the relationship is not highly statistically significant.

Discussions, limitations and future research

The present study aimed to distinguish determinants that affect teenagers attitudes' toward the purchase of fashion luxury items. After an analysis of the literature review were identified the following primary factors: brand consciousness, materialism, social comparison, fashion innovativeness and fashion involvement. Also, there was studied the impact of teenagers attitude on buying intention on luxury fashion items.

Firstly, the obtained results revealed that fashion involvement exhibits a positive influence on the attitude toward luxury fashion items, but the impact is not statistically significant (p-value=0.062>0.05). On the other side, materialism manifests a negative influence on teenagers attitude, but again the influence is not statistically significant (p-value=0.786>0.05). Brand consciousness, fashion involvement and social comparison manifest a positive influence on the teenagers' attitude toward luxury fashion items, but in all cases, the influence is not statistically significant.

Concerning the influence manifested by the attitude on actual purchase intention, it was determined that the association is positive, but again the relationship is slightly statistically significant (p-value=0.079>0.05).

The slight influence of attitude on the actual purchase intention could be explained by the lower net income reported by the majority of respondents and their capacity to invest in the purchase of luxury fashion items.

Although Romania is developing as an attractive market for luxury products, prior investigations were conducted on more developed nations (Summers et al., 2006; Zhang and Kim, 2013), therefore the present study comes to address this aspect.

Also, this study has several limits. Even if the sample was a random one, it is not representative of the whole population of teenagers aged between 18-35 year from Romania. The sample is also limited by the fact that most of the respondents are females who are the fit target market of luxury fashion items but are not illustrative of the overall population.

According to previous research, individuals behaviour and their attitude are influenced by differences that exist among individuals, such as past experiences in buying luxury fashion items. This experience manifests a distinct influence on people attitude and their purchase intention of fashion luxury items. As future analysis is proposed an investigation that could involve buyers previous purchase experience to understand better potential agents that affect teenagers attitude and purchase intention of luxury fashion products.

Acknowledgement

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