

NEW TRENDS IN THE MOTIVATION BEHIND BUYING LUXURY TEXTILE PRODUCTS

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Abstract

Fashion has always been a true fascination for people and at the same time a vast field, especially from an economical perspective. From kings to common folk, not only did fashion represent the answer to a primal need, but it also constituted a way of communicating with society, a way in which one could show his or her social status. Because of this, the motivation behind the acquisition of luxury products proves to be an interesting subject, in order to explore the factors that influence the buying process. Numerous studies (Dubois, 2009, pp.273-278; Cardoso and Pinto, 2010) have shown the importance of luxury for consumers, as a result of a series of factors such as: demographic aspects, economic conditions, education, reputation or fashion trends. This article stems from a quantitative study on the analysis of the reasons for purchasing or not purchasing luxury textile products and sets to determine new reasons that influence the buying process. The hypotheses were tested using a One Way ANOVA and a t-Test, offering important data regarding the study of luxury buyer and also, non-buyer behaviour. The analysis has shown that individuals tend to follow a hedonistic motivation, more so than economic aspects or fashion trends.

Keywords: consumers, luxury fashion, textiles, hedonistic motivation, utility, pleasure, price.

JEL Classification: C51, C52, M31

Introduction

The motivation behind buying a product is a subject that has been long studied, in order to determine what are the factors that influence the decision-making process. Due to the fact that the textile industry has been in a constant state of development that is parallel with the development of society itself, the motivation behind buying luxury textile products has gone through a series of transformations. It is important that we understand the significance of the experience that luxury brands offer to consumers, the actions determine consumers to buy inspirational products, the relation between the utilitarian aspect and the hedonistic nature of these products, or the focus towards relevant personalized rewards offered to customers. In order to determine consumers to buy a luxury product, each and every consumer must feel that he or she is the sole beneficiary of his or her beloved brand.

1. Defining the luxury product

Luxury as always been considered a symbol of power, going from the joy of living within material comfort, to a feeling of plentifulness as a spiritual state. Despite being a widely-discussed subject, the term „luxury” does not have a definition in its true sense according to literature. The word „lux” comes from the latin „luxus” which means „denaturation”, which gradually started to be used in order to imply abundance or excess (Celafato, 2003, pp.74-77). Mandeville (1714) was the first one to attribute a positive meaning to it, underlining the fact that the production of luxury products brought benefits to society from an economic standpoint. Say (1808), however, has regarded luxury as a non-productive segment, condemned to remain ostentatious. Sombart (1913) has differentiated luxury into idealistic, reserved for public or clerical purposes; and egotistical luxury, which serves in satisfying sensory pleasures. Adam Smith (1776) has defined it as opulence and the freedom of people to buy such “blessings” through modern commerce. Veblen (1899) refers to the institution of a luxury class that is comprised of the upper classes, the class of the rich, those who are traditionally spared from industrial occupations and restricted to so called nobil actions. The leisure class is characterized by an ostentatious buying, the acquisition of luxury goods and services, which in turn further accentuates the public display of power in order to maintain a certain social status. Beside ostentatious consumption, there is offensive consumption, or the buying of goods that are meant to deliberately cause the envy of others, being another way of displaying superiority (Tartaglia și Marinozzi, 2006, p. 69). The most important measure of luxury goods is represented by the luxury price. In the luxury industry, price corresponds to the nominal value that is perceived by the client and includes the notion of privilege, because only a certain type of people can afford such goods (Canestrari, 2007, pp.179-187). The price of luxury is a high one, indicating a superior quality, reflecting the status of its user, but can prove to be prohibitive to a large number of potential buyers (Parker and Yogo, 2005, pp.29-59).

Luxury products are aspirational products that satisfy the superior needs of individuals, are characterized by high quality and price, have their own identity, differentiate the user from the others, offer elegance, the feeling of power, extravagance and underline the elite that the buyer belongs to (Silverstein, 2003, pp.3-8). Luxury textile products are goods that offer vertical mobility and transcend through to an elite. The virtue of luxury is a spiritual state that can be reached through an education, while an excessive display of luxury leads to an emancipation of bad taste (Winch, 2013, pp.14-15). Luxury goods are products that are defined by: superior quality, sensory experience, unique design, the use of advanced technique, craftsmanship and mastery, notoriety and exclusivity (Tartaglia and Marinozzi, 2007). Luxury contains three main dimensions: inaccessible luxury, typical of those who are interested only in maintaining an extravagant lifestyle; intermediary luxury, targeted to those who want to affiliate themselves to a group or elite; and accessible luxury, geared towards those who aspire to a life of luxury (pp.126-130, 2007). Thus, luxury goods represent an indicator of one’s status within society, a high level of education, tradition, elegance and opulence, conferring an identity to its user.

2. Aspects regarding the hedonistic motivation of purchasing luxury clothing articles

Motivation has and will remain a much-studied concept, because it is the key to understanding consumer behavior. Motivation refers to the behavioristic manifestations of an individual, which can be created by a state of tension caused by the existence of an

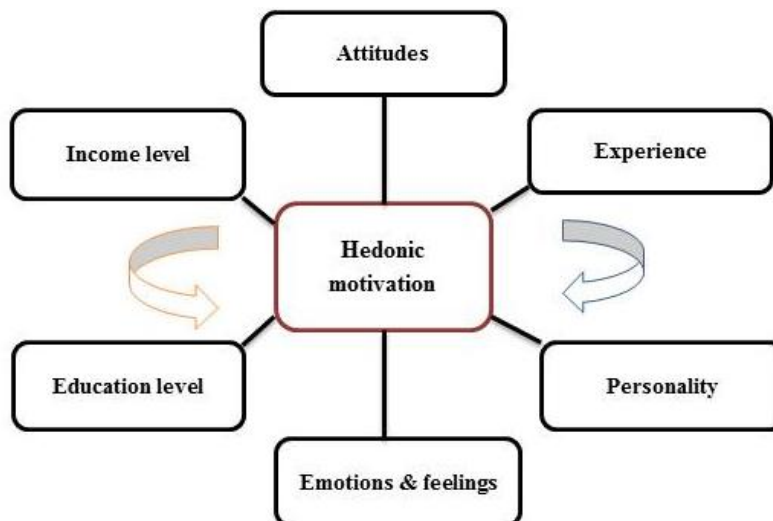
unsatisfied need (Cătoi and Teodorescu, 2004, p.63). The way in which experts discover elements that influence the consumer's "black box" has more to do with the ability to analyze the connections between intrinsic and extrinsic variables. Motivations can be, on one hand, aspects of the individual's uniqueness, and on the other hand, social and cultural aspects (Arnould, 2002, p.24). Starting with the four classical theories of motivation: Freudian impulse theory, archetype theory, Maslow's pyramid and Murray's theory of personality (Foxall and Goldsmith, 2005, pp.1-25) we can determine the reasons behind buying luxury products: the need for safety, for affiliation, diversification, socializing and the need for prestige and power. Luxury products have remained throughout time the most popular products in the world and today more and more people strive to own them. There are three types of individuals that want to own luxury products: rich people who wish to display their wealth and manifest their strong identity, young people that wish to obtain the feeling of satisfaction and imitators that resort to using "hidden rules" in order to gain such products. Studies from the University of Delaware (2013), Luxury Society (2013) and Report Linker (2012) have shown the fact that at a global scale there is a rising trend regarding the buying of luxury textile products. Individuals buy products due to their active lifestyle, their desire for self-development, their fondness for expensive aspirational products and desire to stand out. For example, a young lady in France buys herself a Luis Vuitton handbag for its unique character, because a real luxury product does not come from an assembly line and is not meant for just anyone. Meanwhile, a young lady in Tokyo buys the same handbag because it makes her feel special. Thus, these "loved brands" (Business Insiders, 2014), like Dior or Armani promote the idea that the pleasure of wearing such a high-end luxury product is the only attribute that matters, and the high price comes after it. Arnold (2003) and Evans (2003) claim that fashion is society's product, in a general sense of the term, and that the constant modifications within this industry illustrate the wishes and the unsatisfied needs of the consumer. Considering the luxury products character, the motivation for purchasing them can be hedonistic, because it refers to the influence of intrinsic factors, emotions and feelings towards a certain brands, the pleasure of wearing a unique piece of clothing or the desire to be different (Higgins, 2006, pp.440-441). The motivational principle based on pleasure is tightly connected to emotional values (love, hate, happiness, fear). The buyer's experience can be perceived as an indicator that varies between two scales, good and bad, and the main motivation is the one that keeps the indicator closer towards good. Positive hedonistic motivation refers to the individual's purpose of enjoying the good or beneception, while nociception refers to motivation in a negative way (Petri and Govern, 2012, pp.35-36). John Paul Nafe (1924) has researched emotional motivation and has reached the conclusion that subjects react to emotional stimuli that give them pleasure: color of clothing, music, taste or feelings towards love ones. Also, one can also bear in mind emotions regarding appetite, positive in nature and assertive emotions, which are negative (Bozarth, 1994). When referring to the consumers of luxury products, we can use the diagram that illustrates the two directions within the individual's mind: the effects of wealth and its positive motivation and the effects of poverty and its negative motivation (Gbadamosi, Bathgate and Nwankwo, 2013). Studies have shown that many consumers react either through personality and emotions, or through rational points based on the cost of opportunity (Wakefield and Inman, 2003). A person who makes decisions based on emotions, reacts to the presence or absence of certain stimuli, rather than the lower costing options. Meanwhile, a person who is focused on price, will decide based upon the savings that he or she will gain when purchasing at a lower price. Buyers of luxury goods purchase a product not for its utility, but rather for the feeling of satisfaction and pleasure. If the buyers thinks of luxury, he imagines a state of general

wellness, fact that determines him to buy the luxury product, but if at a cognitive level he or she does not create such image, that the goods are treated from an utilitarian point of view. The positive hedonistic influence comes from the purchasing of luxury goods in order to gain the state of satisfaction. Negative hedonistic motivation refers to utilitarian goods, because these are considered to be bought out of necessity and do not necessarily bring joy to the consumer (Khan, Dhar and Wertenbroch, 2004, p.19). Buyers of luxury textile goods can also be influenced by motivations such as the preservation of their style, fashion trends, prestige and status (Ward and Chiari, 2008). Chadha and Husband (2006) have demonstrated that young people tend to buy luxury clothing for pleasure and entertainment, while old people buy them for a sense of relaxation and harmony. Luxury viewed as a whim is determined by young people that are willing to spend any amount solely for the satisfaction of being the only ones who own a certain piece of clothing (Consulting Business Intelligence, 2008). Another aspect of motivation that is based on feelings and emotions is also illustrated by the experience that a consumer might have inside famous brand clothing stores. The consumer's experience inside such a store can be totally new and unique. The synergy between the ambiance, the sales representative's advices and the unique design of the products make the individual happy and proud when he exits the store carrying a famous brand's products (Business of Fashion, 2014). The pleasure of spending a large amount of money in exchange for living such an experience offers a positive state and the feeling of being treated accordingly.

3. Conceptual Model and hypotheses

The purpose of this study was to identify the variables that influence the new motivations in purchasing luxury textile products. In order to understand what resides within the consumer's mind when deciding to buy a luxury piece of clothing, a conceptual model has been built, with the purpose of analyzing the hedonistic motivation.

Figure nr. 1 Conceptual model analysis of the luxury fashion purchasing motivation



The motivation behind purchasing a luxury article of clothing can be represented generally by the need for prestige, power or the feeling of financial superiority. Currently, the focus resides on the pleasure of buying luxury products, pleasure that appears when fashion becomes attractive aesthetically through colors, design and quality of the materials (De Barnier and others, 2006). The desire to buy aspirational products can be influenced by aspects such as: level of education, buying power, consumption experience and sources of information. Luxury is viewed as the transcending of the social scale due to material wealth, but can also determine a virtue of education and personal experience (Ward and Chiari, 2008, p.10). Thus, the conceptual model created must respond to the hypotheses of the statistical survey regarding reasons behind purchasing luxury textile products:

H1. Hedonistical motivation manifests itself if a direct and negative relation exists between the individual's income level and attitudes towards luxury products.

H2. Hedonistical motivation manifests itself if a direct and positive relation exists between personal experience and level of education.

4. Research Methodology

The article bases itself on a quantitative research in the form of a survey which also represents the central novelty element of the article, setting out to identify and analyze the motivations for purchasing and non-purchasing luxury textile goods. The questionnaire has been submitted to a sample of 100 respondents with ages between 18 and 65 years of age, with different levels of education and levels of income. The subjects who have been interviewed were men and women who participated in various events and expos in the luxury industry, but also men and women who visited fashion boutiques. The survey took place exclusively in Bucharest, the sampling method being non-probabilistic, specifically the quota method, using the gender, level of education and income level as criteria. The sample has been divided into four sub-samples. The first one being comprised of ages between 18 and 30, the second, 31 to 45, the third 46 to 64 and the last one comprised of subjects over 65 years of age.

5. Results

The article briefly presents an analysis of the main factors that reside at the center of the decision-making process in regards to the purchasing of luxury textile goods. In order to determine the new trends in motivation, represented by the hedonistic motivation the influence of attitude towards a famous brand has been taken into consideration, along with personal buying experience of consumers and the levels of both income and education. Regarding the testing of hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of the researched data has been made for two or three groups of dependent variables that were used, income level and education levels.

A One-Way Anova was used in order to observe if a direct and positive relation exists between income and consumer attitudes towards luxury clothing articles.

Table nr. 1 The correlation between income level and attitude towards luxury products

ATTITUDES	Total sample	Observed frequency		
		<i>Bellow average</i>	<i>At the average</i>	<i>Above average</i>
<i>Base</i>	100	12	64	24
A luxury clothing product reflects my personality / mood / prestige.	4.2	3.8	4.1	4.8
I get wear high end clothes because it gives me a feeling of satisfaction and pleasure.	4	3.8	3.7	4.8
Quality products make me purchase high end clothes.	4	2.8	4	4.4
I feel proud when I buy luxury items as gifts to loved ones.	4.1	3.8	4	4.6
I feel impatient and joyous before going to a luxury store in order to buy products.	3.1	4.1	2.9	4.1

Source: Survey made by the author

According to the results of the variance analysis, the hypothesis is rejected, because the sample in cause had a low number of responses. If $F > F_{crit}$, the formulated hypothesis is rejected, the results in this case being $6.134715 > 3.885294$. As a result, we reject the null hypothesis. According to this result, there is no direct correlation between income and consumer's attitudes, but in reality the decision of purchasing luxury products for people with medium and low incomes is primarily based on the product's price. Thus, using ANOVA no clear difference could be observed within the three groups. In order to validate or reject the hypothesis at hand a t-Test has been applied for each pair of the three groups.

If $t_{Stat} < t_{Crit}$ or $t_{Stat} > t_{Crit}$, the null hypothesis is rejected. In this case, the hypothesis is validated: $-2.306004 < -0.25529 < 2.306004$ (the same goes for the other two pairs). Therefore, there is a direct and negative relation between income level and consumer attitudes towards luxury textile products. The observed difference between the two groups (3.66-3.74) is not convincing enough to say that the attitudes that were taken into consideration in the decision-making process differ significantly for the three income categories. On the other hand, for the low and above average income levels, or for the average and above average levels, there is a significant difference. Both the subjects with low incomes and above average incomes aspire to a certain prestige and social status. The ones with higher than average incomes prefer these characteristics because for them, luxury translates into power over others. Also, the fact that all three groups desire to wear such articles due to the fact that it brings them a feeling of joy and a sense of pleasure.

In order to test to see if there is a direct and positive relation between personal consumption experience, according to the second formulated hypothesis, a t-Test has been used, on the count of the use of dependent variables for two groups, medium education and higher education.

The results of the analysis have demonstrated that the hypothesis has been validated: $-2.100922 < 0.027468 < 2.100922$. Therefore, a positive and direct relation exists between the level of education of the subjects and their purchase experience. The main difference that was observed between the two groups (7.4-7.38) is not convincing enough in order to say that the experience of those with medium education levels differs significantly to that of those with higher education levels. The most important attribute within the decision-making process was the relation between quality and price, followed by price, quality and

design. The consumer's experience can develop, starting with the aesthetic values, the hedonistic nature within buying luxury textile goods. The emotions experienced by the individual when purchasing a clothing article belonging to a famous and well-renowned brand are perceived through his or her personal experience.

Conclusions

Thus, the new motivational trends that influence the decision-making process are determined by hedonistic motivations. These in turn can be determined, as it was shown, by factors such as income and education, on one side, and endogenous variables. Studies have shown that people who purchase this type of goods give a much more significant importance to self-image, social status, affiliation with a certain social class or need to have their power asserted. Currently, consumers tend to gravitate towards a sophisticated experience that can offer them certain emotions and feelings once they use a certain luxury piece of clothing. Individuals respond differently to the action of both external and internal factors, thus it is quite difficult to analyze the luxury market when it comes to textiles. The results of the research show the fact that the hedonistic motivation behind purchasing luxury textile goods can be influenced by income levels and education levels, on one hand, and past personal experience, attitudes and emotions, on the other.

Buyers with lower than average incomes and average incomes tend to pay more attention to the experience that they have inside the store and to the satisfaction of their need for social status, while buyers with above average incomes, choose luxury products for their ability to grant them a state of well-being or just to feel the pleasure of buying them as gifts for loved ones.

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