

To Understand Consumer Motivation for Luxury Consumption in Different Context: A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

With the rapid development of emerging technologies and social environments, consumers' needs, motivations, and behaviors are changing fast within the context of the luxury industry at a global level. Although a substantial of studies have focused on either consumer motivation or the field of luxury, a comprehensive analysis of extant literature synthesizing consumer motivation towards luxury is lacking. This paper filled this gap through a systematic literature review approach. A total of 93 articles were identified and categorized in terms of research characteristics and analysis details. Four core themes were recognized, exploring (1) general consumer motivation, (2) motivation of different consumer groups, (3) motivation in different luxury product or service categories, and (4) brand strategy and brand-consumer relationship. A holistic framework was developed with these themes to understand current research of consumer motivation within the context of luxury. Advice on future research agenda is provided.

Keywords

Luxury, Luxury Consumption, Consumer Motivation, Consumer Behavior, Systematic Literature Review

1. Introduction

The business environment has been continuously changing for the luxury industry under the influence of technology development. The information technology, such as the emergence of social media, empowers consumers with greater control over consumption communication. The development of global logistics and e-commerce platforms enable consumers to purchase online more easily and push luxury brands to pay more attention on the construction of online experience for consumers. The process of globalization and digitization has imposed even more fierce competition and rapid changes, and the COVID-19 also triggered a sudden change in the business environment globally in recent years.

In order to face challenges brought by the business environment, it is critical for luxury brands to understand consumers thoroughly, since consumers' motivation to purchase luxury brands influences their actual consumption behaviors. In the meantime, researchers also need to understand current advances in literature on consumer motivation to better advance the latest consumer profiles in a complex and rapidly changing business environment. Therefore, this paper concludes the extant literature of consumer motivations towards luxury consumption and categorizes the influential factors. There is abundant research focused on the motivation to purchase luxury products or services, but a comprehensive review is lack. To fill this research gap, this paper aims to collect and synthesize extant studies on consumer motivation in luxury consumption.

This paper starts with a brief examination of the academic background about luxury and consumer motivation. Then, the methodology to conduct the literature review and the collection and synthesis process of articles are described. The results provided an analysis of article characteristics and a categorization of four themes: general consumer motivation, motivation of different consumer groups, motivation in different product or service categories, and brand strategy and brand-consumer relationship. In the discussion and the conclusion, this study provides implications for future research paths.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Luxury and luxury consumption

The definition of luxury varies and there is not a clear consensus reached among scholars (Ko, Costello and Taylor, 2019). In spite of that, it is agreed that ‘luxury’ is quite subjective based on the understanding of consumers (Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Luxury consumption has been tightly linked with conspicuous consumption since Veblen’s (1899) conceptualization. Veblen indicated that consumers take conspicuous consumption to signal wealth and social status. However, scholars (Berger and Ward, 2010; Eckhardt, Belk and Wilson, 2015) identified an emerging trend of inconspicuous consumption in the context of luxury. Shao et al., (2019) explored the relationship between intrinsic motivation and inconspicuous consumption as well as the moderating role of consumer personality and behavior. With the increasing number of studies focused on the inconspicuous consumption, it is important to further explore the current luxury consumption landscape and influential factors.

2.2 Consumer motivation

As Roy et al. (2018) stated, consumer motivations are mainly related to the consumers’ inner thoughts and feelings. Therefore, consumer motivation to engage in luxury consumption varies in relation to factors as consumers’ demographics, social-economic contexts, and cultural norms. Purchase luxury products satisfy various consumer needs and motives such as to present a specific social class, communicate a desired self-image and provide self-concept reinforcement (Nia and Lynne Zaichkowsky, 2000).

In contrast to buying and owning, consumers are moving towards more recreational and experiential motivations (Bardhi and Eckhardt, 2017). It is important for luxury brands to understand influential factors on consumer motivations, especially within its own product or service category.

3. Approach to The Review

This study employed a systematic review approach (Tranfield, Denyer and Smart, 2003; Baruönü Latif, Kaytaz Yiğit and Kirezli, 2018) in collecting, analyzing, and synthesizing all available papers pertinent to consumer motivation towards luxury.

The collecting strategy consisted of two stages. First, the Scopus database was searched in January of 2022 by using < ‘luxury’ AND ‘consumer motivation’ > within the *title, abstract, and keyword* fields. The initial search was set with two broad terms, so that the search results could include enough number of relevant articles. Further filters were applied to limit search results to published academic journal articles written in English. Books, chapters, and conference papers were excluded. The timeframe was applied to limit articles at the final stage of publication before 2022 to exclude incomplete data. 108 articles were collected based on these criteria.

After the initial search process, a manual review of all the articles’ abstracts was conducted to confirm the suitability. This research only included articles with objectives focusing on consumer motivation within the field of luxury. Fifteen articles were excluded due to irrelevance, incompleteness, or duplication, which indicates that 93 articles were collected for further scrutinizing.

4. Results

To conclude the articles’ characteristics and common themes, each literature was precisely analyzed based on its contents. The findings focused on three parts: the descriptive characteristics, the methodological characteristics, and the thematic analysis.

4.1 Descriptive characteristics

Based on the classification of the Scopus, collected articles belonged to a total of 9 different disciplines. The most studied research fields are “Business, Management and Accounting” (82 publications), “Economics, Econometrics and Finance” (12), “Social Sciences” (12), and “Psychology” (9). Some articles belonged to multiple disciplines at the same time.

The key academic journals of this sample are Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services (10 records), Journal of Business Research (10), Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management (9), Journal of Consumer Marketing (7), Psychology and Marketing (3), European Journal of Marketing (3), and Journal of Promotion Management (3).

Upon the analysis of publications per year, there were very few articles related to this topic published before 2009. The number started to fluctuate from 2009 to 2016 within a range of 2 - 8 articles per year. And a steady increase in the number of articles could be observed since 2017, except that there was 1 article less in 2020 than in 2019. And a surge from 10 articles to 17 articles was observed from 2020 to 2021.

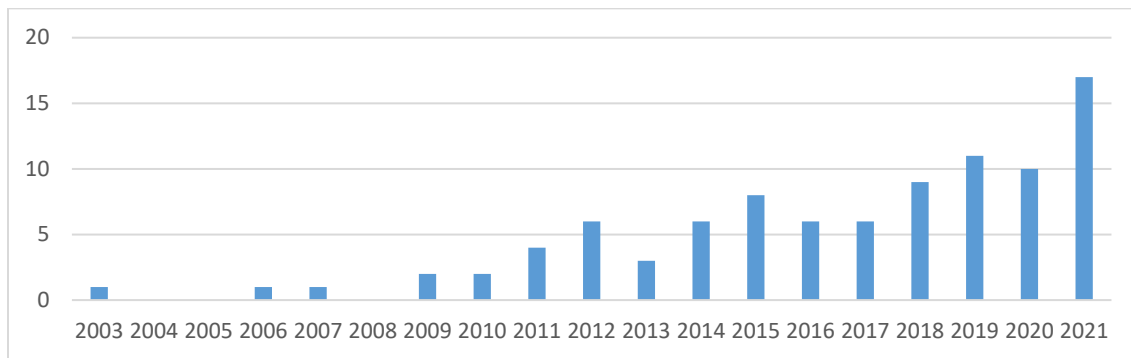


Figure 1: Number of Articles

4.2 Methodological characteristics

From the methodological perspective, the sample was analyzed with respect of research type, research design, and analysis techniques. A majority (62.37%, 58 out of 93) of the literature was conducted as quantitative research. 24 papers applied the qualitative approach, and 8 papers applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Only 3 papers applied the review approach as the major research type.

The most used research design was survey, which was used in 58 articles (62.37%), followed by interview (23, 24.73%), focus group (8, 8.60%), experimentation (5, 5.38%), and literature review (5, 5.38%). Among these studies, 19 articles utilized multiple research design which is shown in the below figure 2.

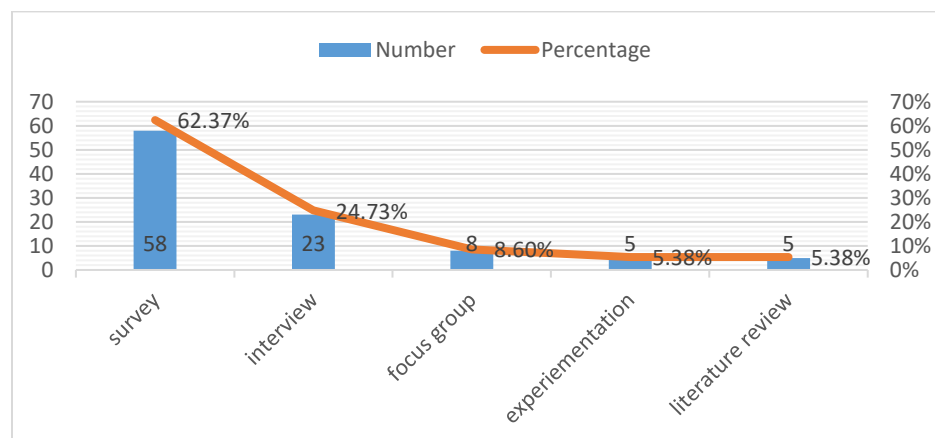


Figure 2: Research Design

Analysis techniques(See figure 3) were categorized into different major groups. Structural equation modeling (SEM) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) composed the most used technique group, which was applied in 39 articles. Qualitative analysis methods (22), such as thematic analysis, narrative analysis, content analysis, and cluster analysis, followed as the second used group. The next in order were two groups of data tied in the ranking, which were the correlation and regression (17), and factor analysis (17). The last major group was t-test, ANOVA and MANOVA (16).

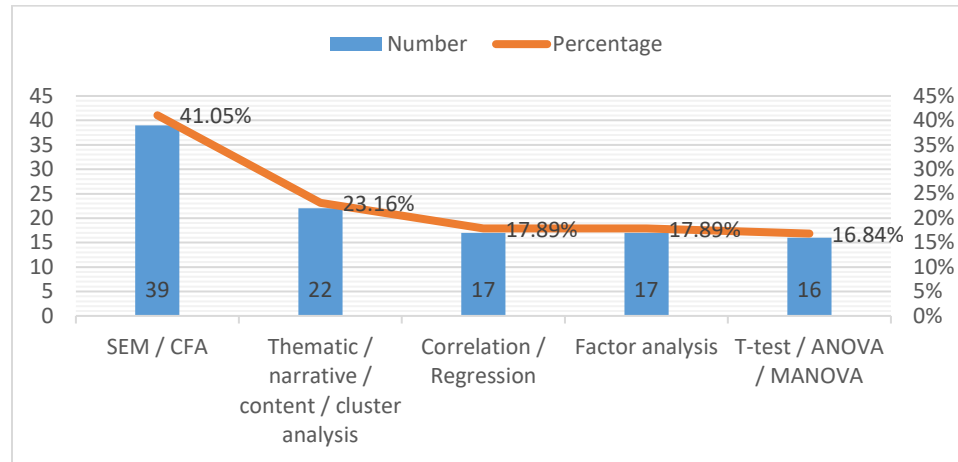


Figure 3: Analysis Techniques

4.3 Theme analysis

Within the context of consumer motivation related to luxury, four themes were identified through the review process. The categorization criteria were based on the major research objects of each article. Articles in the first theme focused on the general consumer motivation towards luxury shopping shared by different consumer groups and luxury industries. In the second theme, articles analyzed the variation of motivation in different consumer groups. For the third theme, the divergence of consumer motivations in different product or categories was scrutinized. In the last theme, articles focused on the influence of brand strategy imposing on consumer motivations and the interaction between brands and consumers.

4.3.1 General consumer motivation

Studies of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation constructed the basis of research in consumer motivation to purchase luxury products. Out of the eighteen articles in this category, seven studies focused on consumers' intrinsic motivation pertinent to luxury consumption. Self-concept, need for uniqueness, and self-expansion were the most studied intrinsic factors. (Khan and Dhar, 2006; Truong and McColl, 2011; Brun and Castelli, 2013; Shao, Grace and Ross, 2019b, 2019a; Barrera and Ponce, 2021; Chen *et al.*, 2021)

In the meanwhile, eight studies focused on consumer motivation towards status consumption, interpersonal relationships, and other social factors. Social comparison, social adjustive attitude, symbolic consumption were topics that included. (Elizabeth Bock *et al.*, 2014; Chan *et al.*, 2015; Brun and Castelli, 2016; Zhang *et al.*, 2019; Shao *et al.*, 2019a, 2019b; Chen *et al.*2021; Wang *et al.*, 2021)

Since Veblen's (1899) study on conspicuous consumption, the extrinsic value was recognized as a major motivation during the purchase of luxury products. In recent years, Yuan *et al.* (2021) explained the similarities and differences between conspicuous consumption and luxury consumption. And Shahid and Paul (2021) found that consumers gradually became intrinsically driven in luxury consumption.

A few studies also focused on other factors influencing consumer behaviors in the context of luxury consumption, such as envy(Loureiro *et al.*, 2020) and narcissism (Fastoso *et al.*, 2018). Although some research was conducted on a certain group of consumers, they didn't focus on characteristics of the specific consumer group. Instead, the target group was only a mechanism to explore the overall consumer traits. It is meaningful to expand the research target to a larger group of consumers based on the results of these studies.

4.3.2 Motivation of different consumer groups

As the most frequently studied theme, a substantial of studies (35 articles) was conducted on a certain group of consumers based on demographic factors (such as age, generation, and gender), cultural and geographical factors (such as district, country, and religion), or specific behaviors (such as purchasing luxury goods during tourism).

In relation to age groups, young consumers like Millennials and Generation Y as emergent segments in the luxury market (Giovannini, Xu and Thomas, 2015) were objectives frequently studied. Luxury brands offer these consumers not only conspicuous or hedonic values but also opportunities for self-expansion and self-growth (Tak, 2020; de Kerviler and Rodriguez, 2019). The comparison of different age cohorts' motivation (Eastman and Liu, 2012; Halwani, 2021) was another popular topic which can provide practical implications for luxury brands to target consumer segments more accurately.

Regarding of individual luxury markets, China (11 articles), the U.S. (4), and India (4) were the most studied ones. Comparison of different markets was mostly focused on the difference between mature and emergent markets or collectivistic and individualistic cultures (Shaikh *et al.*, 2017; Yu and Sapp, 2019). Within the study of Naumova *et al.* (2019), it was found that consumers from cultures with high collectivism primarily perceive social values in consuming luxury goods and are sensitive to conspicuous luxury, while consumers from cultures with high individualism perceive individual and functional values and are sensitive to hedonistic luxury.

4.3.3 Motivation in different product or service categories

Studies focused on motivation towards a distinctive product or service category comprised 25.81% (24 out of 93) of all the studies. Within this theme, collaborative consumption (7), the hospitality industry (6), and counterfeit products (5) were the most studied categories.

In the collaborative luxury consumption, vintage products, second-hand products, and rental services were explored to understand consumer motivations in unconventional categories (Guzzetti *et al.*, 2021). Vintage products provide consumers satisfaction of individual identity, improvement of self-confidence, and achievement as a sense of fulfillment (Amatulli *et al.*, 2018). Second-hand products enable consumers to link with social climbing, eco-conscious concerns, brand heritage and windfall (Kessous and Valette-Florence, 2019). While, consumers' choices of rental services were more driven by utilitarian reasons (Guzzetti *et al.*, 2021).

In studies of the hospitality industries, motivations and perceived risks of consumers towards sustainable operations in regard of hotel and restaurant services were explored (Rishi *et al.*, 2015; Peng and Chen, 2019; Peng, 2020). With the growing attention on the sustainable luxury, these studies provide valuable implications in understanding factors that motivate or discourage consumers to engage in green behavior (Peng, 2020; Peng and Chen, 2019; Rishi *et al.*, 2015).

It is widely accepted that social function is the major factor that influences consumer attitudes towards counterfeit consumption (Xiao *et al.*, 2018; Wilcox *et al.*, 2009). Bian *et al.* (2016) clarified the psychological and emotional factors that both drive and result from the consumption of counterfeit products. Xiao *et al.* (2018) investigated how self-monitoring and perceived social risk moderate the effect of actual-ideal self-discrepancy on consumers' attitudes towards counterfeit branded luxuries.

4.3.4 Brand strategy and brand-consumer relationship

Among the four themes, the topic related with brand strategy and brand-consumer relationship experienced less exploration with seventeen articles, which is the same amount with the first theme about the general consumer motivation.

A fundamental topic within this theme is self-congruity, the association of a consumer's self-image with the brand image. Roy and Rabbane (2015) found that self-congruity with a luxury brand is found to enhance consumers' self-perceptions. Li *et al.* (2019) identified that higher class consumers often focus more on the intrinsic value of brand to express their self-identity, resulting in a higher self-brand association. Consequently, these consumers prefer to engage in inconspicuous consumption due to the strong tie between their self-image and the brand image.

Several brand strategies and the corresponding influence on consumers are discussed, such as corporate social responsibility (Ahn, 2015), inter-industry creative collaboration (Alexander and Contreras, 2016), pop-up retailing (Taube and Warnaby, 2017), brand globalness (Hassan et al., 2015), and pricing (Kapferer and Valette-Florence, 2021). An emerging topic within this theme is digitization, where social media marketing and online retailing were the major research objects. Liu et al., (2013) and Klaus (2020) focused on the difference of consumer motivation towards online and offline luxury consumption. In-store experience plays a vital role to fulfill consumers' expectation of luxury quality and experience. With the development of digitization, luxury brands need to understand the difference in consumer motivation of online and offline experience. Klaus (2020) explored consumers' motivations expected and received from the Online Luxury Experience (OLX). Various studies discussed the motivations of consumers to engage with luxury brands on social media. Martín-Consuegra et al. (2019) analyzed the relationship among brand involvement, consumer-brand interaction, and behavioral intention. Bazi et al. (2020) identified 13 motivations of consumer engagement and grouped them into six macro-dimensions. Jansom and Pongsakornrungsilp (2021) studied the role of influencers in marketing in terms of consumers' motivations on luxury purchasing. As Pentina et al., (2018) indicated, consumer engagement behaviors have different potential for luxury brand cocreation on social media.

5. Future Research Agenda

Despite the increasing number of publications within the field of consumer motivation in luxury consumption (as illustrated in the Figure 1), there are still many research gaps need further exploration. The following topics within each theme are proposed for future research agenda to expand our understanding of consumer motivation towards luxury.

5.1 Intrinsic Value and Subtle Signals

Previous research has investigated links between brand visibility and consumer motivation in the luxury context (Berger and Ward, 2010). The findings highlight consumers acquire luxury brands to construct a desirable self-concept by communicating central beliefs, attitudes, and values to others (self-expressive) or alternatively, to gain approval in social situations (social-adjustive). Shao et al. (2019b) found an interesting result in their research that consumer motivation (extrinsic versus intrinsic) does not have a direct influence on brand visibility (explicit versus subtle). Further scrutiny into this relationship of consumer intrinsic motivation and subtly marked luxury brand could provide meaningful implications for the design of strategies in luxury industry.

In the meanwhile, it was implied that Chinese consumers purchase luxury goods for the fulfillment of functional and social needs (Lloyd and Luk, 2010). This is coherent with the research of Naumova et al. (2019), which indicated that consumers from cultures with high collectivism primarily perceive social values in consuming luxury goods. After years of luxury brands' development in the emergent markets and the accumulation of consumers' knowledge in luxury product, the recent study of Li et al. (2021) revealed a different situation that the idea of individuality has started to influence Chinese consumers' luxury purchases. Therefore, it is interesting for future research to explore consumer motivations related with intrinsic value in emergent luxury markets.

5.2 Inter and Intra-country Difference

Under the globalization process, luxury brands expand from local markets to global markets. Therefore, the understanding of consumers with different cultural backgrounds contributes to their business growth. As concluded in the second theme (motivation of different consumer groups), cultural difference, especially for consumers of different countries, became a popular topic investigated in extant literature.

However, consumers are assumed to have similar thoughts and behaviors within a country and the existence of intra-country differences is not considered (Shukla and Rosendo-Rios, 2021). With the gradual mature of luxury research, further segmentation of consumer groups within a country is meaningful for future research, especially for major researched markets like China, the U.S., and India. For countries with large population and vast territory, it indicates that consumer motivations and behaviors exist huge intra-country difference and need further research.

5.3 From Luxury Product to Experience

In the third theme (motivation in different product or service categories), the tangible aspects of luxury goods remain the focus, and the luxury experience is less discussed (Hemetsberger, 2012). According to de Kerviler and Rodriguez

(2019), consumers take luxury consumption not only as the pursuit of materialism but also the search for enrichment through experiences.

The focus on collaborative consumption in luxury also described that the consumption of vintage and secondhand luxury items is also an experience for consumers to indulge in their fantasies and feel the excitement linked to an unpredictable shopping activity (Guzzetti et al., 2021). In the luxury hospitality field, consumers concerned that sustainable practices of luxury restaurants would bring perceived risk to their dining experiences.

Luxury experience plays a vital role to maintain the quality level of luxury brands and the consumers' increasing concern in the experiences worth further exploring since it indicates changing motivations and behaviors.

5.4 Social Media Marketing and Online Shopping

Research of brand strategy to influence consumer motivation is an underdeveloped theme. The developing digital technologies enable consumers to have stronger control of consumption information through communicating with each other on social media platforms. Extant literature of online and offline luxury retailing (Klaus, 2020; Liu et al., 2013) is not enough for luxury brands to build a holistic consumer luxury experience from communicating luxury information through social media marketing to provide smoothly switchable online and offline experience. Future research of influence from consumer motivation on online luxury shopping moderated by social media marketing will provide detailed managerial implications for luxury brands.

6. Conclusion

Research continues to target at exploring why consumers are motivated to buy luxury products in different contexts. This paper has concluded four themes to understand distinctive research paths in this field and provide advice on future research paths. While categories of values motivating consumers, typologies of consumer groups, variations of luxury industries, and effective brand strategies have been widely explored in extant literature, the business context and consumer characteristics face fierce competitiveness and dramatic changes, especially under the global influence of COVID-19 in recent years. The rise of alternative communication and consumption modes compared with traditional ones proposes challenges to understand transformation in consumer motivation towards luxury consumption.

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