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HOW GENDER AFFECTS THE BUYING-DECISION PROCESS AMONG CONSUMERS OF LUXURY GOODS

ABSTRACT

Over the decades, many studies focused on luxury brand consumption and explored the customer perception and motives for purchasing luxury brands. Nevertheless, the role of gender in this context has been neglected. Recently, some researchers have been studying the influence of gender on luxury purchases. However, the subject is not fully explored and the effect of some motivations are still lacking on the studies.

The present dissertation is based on previous researches about luxury values, consumer behaviour and gender behavioural differences. The study aimed to contribute to the analysis of whether men and women buy luxury for different reasons, from which the following research questions arise: Does gender have an effect on the purchase of luxury goods? And how does gender affect the buying-decision process among consumers of luxury goods?

In order to answer these questions, a documentary analysis was conducted, as well as a face-to-face questionnaire to Portuguese women and men that buy ready-to-wear and/or luxury accessories.

Results revealed that different motivations are attributed to each gender; in other words, women and men buy luxury products for different reasons. It was established that women have a higher purchase intention than men and respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity. Furthermore, men showed to be motivated by materialistic value, status value and conspicuous value, responding more positively to luxury brands loyalty programs than females. Nevertheless, gender did not show an effect on hedonic value, susceptibility to normative influence and uniqueness value.

Keywords: Luxury brands; Gender; Purchase intention; Consumer motivations.

1. Introduction

The connotation of luxury differs in time and space and is a subject of many interpretations (Nwankwo *et al.*, 2014). Although used in the consumers' everyday life, it takes multiple definitions for different people and is correlated to the experience of the consumer itself. For example, to Kapferer (1997: 253) the word luxury "defines beauty; it is art applied to functional items." On the other hand, luxury can be

defined as an indulgence or convenience beyond what is indispensable. According to Berry (1994), necessities are utilitarian items that relieve an unpleasant state of discomfort, whereas luxury goods enable consumers to satisfy, not only functional needs, but also psychological needs.

Luxury goods are called, in economics, Veblen goods. These are types of material commodities for which the demand increases as the price increases, due to its exclusive nature and appeal as a status symbol.

Within the luxury offer, there is a great offer of luxury categories. There are four principal categories of luxury goods: fashion (couture, ready-to-wear and accessories), perfumes and cosmetics, wines and spirits and watches and jewellery (Jackson, 2004). The categories of luxury automobiles, hotels, tourism, private banking, home furnishing and airlines have also been added, more recently.

Similar to what happens in utilitarian items, there is also a buying decision process when it comes to luxury items. Engel, Blackweel and Kollat (1968) developed a five-step model of consumer buying decision process: problem and need recognition, information search, evaluation of alternatives to meet their needs, purchase decision and post-purchase behaviour. This dissertation is mainly focused on the first step, problem and need recognition that happens when there is a gap between the consumer's current situation and the ideal or desired one.

It is also important to analyse gender behavioural differences as this study focus on the different motivations that led women and men into buying luxury products. Women and men are, by nature, different. Evolutionary theories predicted that sexual selection pressures have shaped the way both genders react to different situations, communications and other stimuli. Women often define their identity in accordance with their environment and through interaction with other individuals, while men generally show an individualistic character of autonomy and independence (Prakash, 1992).

Different life orientations of men and women influence their consumer behaviour. These dissimilarities can be seen, not only in every-day life, but also in the consumer buying decision process. For example, men consume conspicuously and use luxury brands to visually portray economic achievement and accomplishment (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004).

2. Literature Review

There is little agreement when it comes to define the word “luxury”. The meaning of luxury differs in time and space, and is a subject of multiple interpretations (Nwankwo *et al.*, 2014). Cornell (2002) states that “luxury is particularly slippery to define” and that key components are “a strong element of human involvement, very limited supply and recognition of value by others”. On the other hand, there is an agreement in literature to define “luxury goods”. These items, besides having a functional utility, seem to bring other kinds of value to the owner. In other words, luxury products allow consumers to satisfy psychological and functional needs, and it seems that these benefits are the key factor distinguishing them from non-luxury products (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000).

Luxury brands are “those whose ratio of functionality to price is low, while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high” (Nueno and Quelch, 1998). Buying luxury brands serve various consumer needs and motives, aside from the functional utility, such as the desire to portray a social class, communicate a desired self-image and provide self-concept reinforcement (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000). The luxury fashion industry was born and developed in France in the nineteenth century (Crane, 1997). The term “conspicuous consumption” was introduced by Veblen (1899) to represent the elite segment of the society who consumed luxury goods and possessed higher status in the society.

Mazzalovo (2008) defends that luxury is divided in different sectors of activities: **Exclusive ready-to-wear category for women and men:** such as Chanel, Valentino, Prada, Burberry, Versace, Celine, among others; **Luxury jewellery and watches:** Cartier and Rolex are examples of this type of brands; **Perfumes and Cosmetics:** for example, Chanel, Burberry and Prada; **Fashion accessories brands:** Louboutin and Tod’s are good examples of this category; **Wines and spirits:** Macallan and Domaine are two brands of luxury whiskey and wine, respectively; **Luxury automobiles:** for example, Rolls Royce, Bentley, Maserati, Porsche, Ferrari; **Luxury hotels:** for example Ritz – Four Seasons Hotel; **Luxury Tourism:** for example, Crystal Cruises is one of the best in the luxury cruise industry and is known for both its discerning service and interesting itineraries; **Private Banking:** a good example is ABN AMRO Private Banking; **Gadgets - a new segment:** For example, British company Goldgenie is offering 24

carat gold-plating services on the iPhone 6 to shoppers around the world.

Focusing on luxury values, Vigneron and Johnson (2004) recommended a “brand luxury index” which included “personal perception” and “non-personal perception” as key aspects related to luxury value perception. Wiedmann, Hennings and Siebels (2009) conceptualized four dimensions: “social value; individual value; functional value and financial value”.

Literature identifies two key reasons behind consumption of luxury goods: internal motivations (personal value) and external motivations (social value). For that reason, Jain, Khan and Mishra (2015) classified motives behind consumers’ luxury goods consumption as “intrinsic” (personal) factors and “extrinsic” (social) factors. The theoretical foundation of this study is based upon the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991).

Intrinsic factors refer to purchase of luxury goods purely for inner satisfaction. Extrinsic factors refer to the purchase of luxury goods primarily to flaunt money and status to others (O’Cass and Frost, 2002).

As stated before, there are multiple identified dimension/key attributes within the existing literature. Within the luxury concept the brand name and identity are considered crucial (Okonkwo, 2007; Jackson, 2004; Alleres, 2003; Dubois and Laurent, 1994). Moore and Birtwistle (2005) state that the luxury brand requires a relevant, clear and defined marketing strategy. The strategy is formed to assist in developing the global reputation and presence of the brand, and to leverage the brand status and awareness.

The components of rarity and exclusivity are considered a significant trait of luxury brands (Dubois and Paternault, 1995; Dubois and Duguesne, 1993), as well as the aura of scarcity that adds to the appeal and desire for luxury brands (Hanna, 2004). Marketing managers can sustain the exclusivity of the brand by endorsing, controlling distribution and price, as well as producing limited edition lines.

The environment and service provided by luxury brands are also crucial attributes in the luxury proposition.

Customer service is another vital component in the luxury consumption experience. Within fashion, branding has become as much about branding the experience as the product (Moore, 2003). Along with the control of the consumer experience, Moore and Birtwistle (2005) and Okonkwo (2007) state the

importance of controlling the manufacturer, particularly with license agreements to ensure that the brand positioning is not compromised.

Brand heritage is considered prevalent in several models. Many luxury brands have a long history, which adds to the authenticity of the brand (Jackson, 2001), and is considered one of the hallmarks of a luxury brand. The preservation of heritage has the ability to create nostalgia and credibility for a brand (Naughton and Vlastic, 1998), and is often correlated to the heritage of the country of origin.

Powerful marketing communications are considered fundamental to building the luxury brand image (Okonkwo, 2007). Advertising can provide support in establishing the brand image, which consequently assists in creating identity and attraction, generating awareness.

Lastly, the company spirit is also considered key to luxury fashion brand success. The investment in the spirit or culture of a firm gives the necessary support for a brand to extend to an internal commitment to the brand (Tosti and Stotz, 2001). Internal branding assists the employees in understanding desire, and encourages them to deliver on the brand promise (Lynch and Chernatony, 2004).

Research in personality psychology has found a “gender effect”: men tend to be more assertive and risk taking than women, while women are generally higher than men in anxiety and tender-mindedness (Brody & Hall, 2000). The effects of these sex differences lead to predictable differences in men’s and women’s leisure behaviours, occupational preferences, and health-related outcomes (Lippa, 2005). Sex dissimilarities in personality traits, however, are not uniform across the globe. At times, sex differences can be much larger in some cultures than in others. One finding has been that sex differences in personality traits are often greater in successful, healthy, and democratic cultures in which women have more opportunities equal with men, meaning that western nations with individualistic values exhibit greater sex differences in personality traits than do collectivistic cultures (Costa *et al*, 2001).

There are multiple explanations to why men and women have different personality traits. There are three main theoretical approaches to the study of gender: Socio-cultural theories; evolutionary, and hormone and brain science approaches (Meyers-Levy and Loken, 2015).

Social–cultural theories state that differences in the genders' inherent physical capacities, such as the size,

strength and child-bearing capability, impelled males and females to adopt different roles, and this in turn gave rise to congenial cultural beliefs and orientations that have perpetuated over time.

The evolutionary explanations state that sex-related differences arise, in part, from innate dispositional differences between the Genders (Geary, 1998). In this view, the sexes are thought to psychologically differ only in domains in which they have faced different adaptive problems throughout evolutionary history. As a consequence, much of the sex-related differences that appear in modern societies may be due to sexual selection pressures that shaped psychological sex differences in the evolutionary past. For example, sex differences in parenting levels are thought to have led to sexual selection pressures causing men (the ones that had fewer responsibilities when it comes to raising their children) to be more prone to take risks and to seek social dominance while women had to be more cautious and nurturing. While men follow life goals directed toward task-oriented thinking and performance-motivated acting, women more strongly life goals directed toward social and emotional relationships with others (e.g., Meyers-Levy, 1988; Prakash, 1992).

All of this information supports the fact that women and men have different drivers and personality traits, to which brands have to pay attention.

Companies market their products differently to males and females. Meyers-Levy and Loken (2014: 130) state that *“They might position a convenience meal to working moms rather than dads, develop luxury brand relationships online for men but employ more personal messages for women, or develop child-targeted advertising that focuses on different benefits for girls versus boys.”*

In a majority of markets and product categories, the price for female luxury brands is significantly higher compared to their male counterparts, which could be explained by the stronger social orientation of women. Stokburger-Sauer and Teichman (2013) found that, generally, women have a more positive attitude and a higher purchase intention of luxury brands versus non-luxury brands than men. On the other hand, men are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption than women to show economic achievement and eventually attract a potential mate, (O’Cass & McEwen, 2004).

Consumers often buy products for their symbolic benefits; nevertheless research indicates that the

genders differ in the value they assign to such benefits. Overall, females display higher levels of brand sensitivity and brand consciousness (Workman & Lee, 2013) and regard luxury brands more favorably (Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013), while males demonstrate more materialistic values and conspicuous product consumption (Segal & Podoshen, 2012).

It is possible to verify, from these studies and discoveries, that women and men consume luxury goods for distinctive reasons, and the market should be prepared for their different needs and drivers.

3. Methodology

The main purpose of this study is to examine the drivers and motivations of purchasing luxury goods for both genders. These drivers arise from the BLI developed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and from the value dimensions proposed by Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2009). The specific aim of the dissertation is to identify and profile two consumer segments in the luxury market: women and men.

The final purpose of the study is to provide tools and knowledge to managers and marketing experts for them to ^{[[[}communicate effectively to both genders. The goal is that these findings will help, in the future, luxury brands to adapt their approach and communicate more effectively to all customers.

Based on the literature review, the following hypothesis are proposed:

H1: Women have a higher purchase intention of luxury brands than men.

H2: When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as hedonic value (H2a), quality value (H2b), materialistic value (H2c) and self-identity value (H2d), than men.

H3: When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as status value (H3a); conspicuous value (H3b); susceptibility to normative influence (H3c) and uniqueness value (H3d), than women.

H4: Women respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity than men.

H5: Men are more loyal and respond more favourably to luxury brand loyalty programs than women.

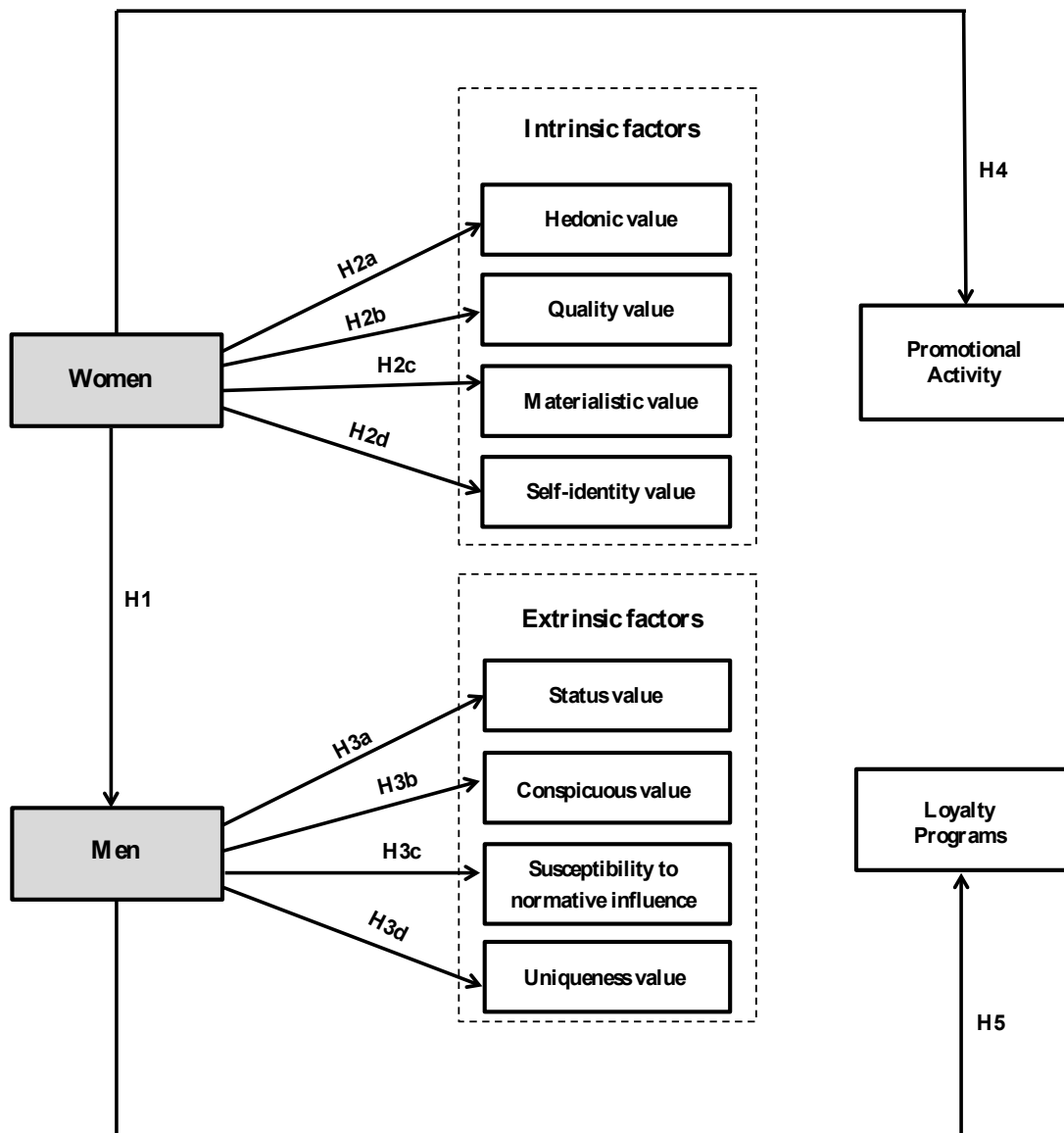


Figure 1: Proposed conceptual framework

A conclusive research design was adopted since the goal of this investigation was to perform a formal and structured research to test particular hypotheses and relationships based on clear information. Additionally, the conclusions of this paper were expected to provide information to be taken into consideration in, and useful to, the managerial decision making process (Malhotra, 2007).

A deductive approach was considered appropriate for the study because it was based on multiple existing theories and studies that were tested in a particular situation (Wilson, 2010). Therefore, a “top-down” approach (theory, hypothesis, observation and confirmation) was adopted, since the analysis will evolve from generic topics to specific ones, where conclusions will follow logical premises (Beiske, 2007; Snieder and Larner, 2009)

To ensure more precise information, two methods were used: primary and secondary data.

The primary data method consisted in a quantitative approach, where a survey was made to luxury consumers. The **quantitative study** consisted in a face-to-face questionnaire, which objective was to collect information of a wide range of luxury ready-to-wear consumers (women and men), about their attitudes and motivations to buy those products. Survey questionnaires are the main methods of collecting quantitative primary data in marketing research (Malhotra, 2007).

Secondary data are classified according to their source as internal and external secondary data. In the documentary analysis external sources have been used, such as academic journals from marketing, management, consumer research and psychology areas; books and other topic related articles and dissertations. All of this research had the purpose to understand the luxury market environment, consumer behaviour, gender behavioural differences and all the players surrounding the current study.

As mentioned previously, this analysis follows the study made by Jain, Khan and Mishra (2015) and the values of Wiedmann, Hennings and Siebels (2009).

The target population of this study includes male and female Portuguese adult individuals who had bought, in Portugal, throughout last year, any luxury ready-to-wear goods.

Thereby, a convenience sample of 142 respondents was gathered. The questionnaire was conducted during the months of May and June of 2016 in different hours of the day, in order to find consumers of different ages and genders.

4. Data analysis and results

The sample is composed by 75 are females that account for 52,8% of the total sample, and 67 males, which account for 47,2% of the sample. When it comes to the age of the respondents, the majority of the answers are from individuals aged between 26 and 35 (30,3%). Furthermore, the average of the sample is of 38 years old. Finally, in terms of the educational background of the sample it was considered the respondent last finished academic level. The majority of the sample has a bachelor's degree (52,8%), 36 respondents have a high school degree (25,4%), 24 obtain a master's degree (16,9%), 5 respondents

finished 9th grade (3,5%) and 2 have a PhD (1,4%).

Reliability means that a measure should consistently reflect the construct that it is measuring (Field, 2009). In statistical terms, the usual way to look at reliability is based on the idea that individual items should produce results consistent with the overall questionnaire. This reliability can be evaluated by the Cronbach's Alpha.

The composition of each scale proposed and its level of internal consistency can be observed in table 1.

| Scale | Number of items | Cronbach's alpha |
|---------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Purchase Intention | 5 | 0,829 |
| Hedonic Value | 4 | 0,773 |
| Quality Value | 3 | 0,490 |
| Materialistic Value | 4 | 0,825 |
| Self-Identity Value | 3 | 0,401 |
| Status Value/Prestige | 4 | 0,931 |
| Conspicuousness Value | 5 | 0,855 |
| Susceptibility to normative influence | 4 | 0,788 |
| Uniqueness Value | 5 | 0,562 |
| Promotional Activity | 4 | 0,884 |
| Brand Loyalty | 4 | 0,576 |

Table 1: Internal reliability of the scales

Commonly, a value of 0,7 to 0,8 is an acceptable value for Cronbach's α and values substantially lower indicate an unreliable scale. Kline (1999) notes that when dealing with psychological constructs, such as the current study, values below 0,7 can, realistically, be expected because of the diversity of the constructs being measured.

Furthermore, Cortina (1993) notes that general guidelines need to be used with caution because the value of α also depends on the number of items on the scale - as the number of items on the scale increases, α will increase. Carmines and Zeller (1979) also states that increasing the number of items on a scale can improve the scale's reliability.

It is possible to observe, in table 1, that Uniqueness Value and Brand Loyalty have values inferior to 0,6. However, as the number of items is small and this is a psychological construct, in which emotions' respondents have an impact in their answers, these measures will still be used in the analysis (even if the values are considered to have a poor internal consistency). On the other hand, Quality Value and Self-

Identity Value have an unacceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values below 0,5. These situations were not possible to correct by the elimination of any of the items of the scale. As consequence, these measures were not used in further analysis.

H1: Women have a higher purchase intention of luxury brands than men.

The Mann-Whitney test works by looking at differences in the ranked positions of scores in different groups. Therefore, the first summarizes the data after it has been ranked. The Mann-Whitney test relies on scores being ranked from lowest to highest; therefore, the group with the lowest mean rank is the group with the greatest number of lower scores in it. Likewise, the group with the highest mean rank should have the greater number of high scores within it. Consequently, the first output table can be used to establish which group had the highest and lowest scores (Field, 2009). We can conclude that women responded in the more positive side of the scale in all the items, while men responded in the more negative side of the scale.

The Mann-Whitney test works by looking at differences in the ranked positions of scores in different groups. Therefore, the first summarizes the data after it has been ranked. The Mann-Whitney test relies on scores being ranked from lowest to highest; therefore, the group with the lowest mean rank is the group with the greatest number of lower scores in it. Likewise, the group with the highest mean rank should have the greater number of high scores within it. If no prediction had been made about which group will differ from which, the two-tailed probability would be used (Field, 2009). Furthermore, hypothesis 1 consists in a directional prediction, since it predicts the nature of the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable.

If the p value is below the alpha risk of 5%, the null hypothesis is rejected and, at least, one significant difference can be assumed. For these data, the Mann-Whitney test results are significant ($p < 0,05$) for all five items (I1, I2, I3, I4 and I5) and the **null can be rejected**. The value of the mean rankings indicates that the **women group has a significantly higher purchase intention of luxury brands than men**.

H2: When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as hedonic value (H2a), quality value (H2b), materialistic value (H2c) and self-identity value (H2d), than men.

H2a: When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as hedonic value, than men.

We can conclude that women responded in the more positive side of the scale in all the items, while men responded in the more negative side of the scale. However, and looking at the exact significance of the one-tailed, it is possible to conclude that the Mann-Whitney test results are not significant since the p-value is higher than the significance level ($p\text{-value}_{11}= 0,180 > 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{12}=0,115 > 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{14}=0,075 > 0,05$). Only item 3 (purchasing luxury brands provides me pleasure) has a p-value lower than the significance level ($p\text{-value}_{13}=0,039 < 0,05$). It is possible to conclude that women, when buying luxury goods, are not more driven by hedonic value than men, with the exception of item 3, that shows that women obtain more pleasure purchasing luxury brands than men.

As stated before, Quality Value and Self-Identity Value have an unacceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's Alpha values below 0,5. For this reason, H2b and H2d will not be tested.

H2c: When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as materialistic value, than men. We can conclude that men responded in the more positive side of the scale in all the items, while women responded in the more negative side of the scale.

Looking at the exact significance of the one-tailed, it is possible to conclude that the Mann-Whitney test results are significant for 3 items ($p\text{-value}_{11}= 0,019 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{12}=0,000 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{14}=0,009 < 0,05$). This means that **men, when buying luxury products, are more driven by materialistic value** than women, with the exception of item 3, which results are not significant since the p-value is higher than the significance level ($p\text{-value}_{13}= 0,071 > 0,05$).

H3: When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as status value (H3a); conspicuous value (H3b); susceptibility to normative influence (H3c) and uniqueness value (H3d), than women.

H3a: When buying luxury products men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as status value, than women. It is possible to conclude that men responded much more favourably (higher scores) in all items, while women responded in the more negative side of the scale (lower scores).

For these data the Mann-Whitney test results are significant ($p\text{-value}_{11, 12, 13, 14} = 0,000 < 0,05$) for all four items. The value of the mean rankings indicates that the **men group is significantly more driven by status value than women.**

H3b: When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as conspicuous value, than women. Similarly to what happened in status value, men responded much more favourably (higher scores) in all items, while women responded in the more negative side of the scale (lower scores).

The Mann-Whitney test results are significant for four items ($p\text{-value}_{11}=0,044 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{12}=0,000 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{13}=0,005 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{15}=0,044 < 0,05$). This means that **men, when buying luxury products, are more driven by conspicuous value than women, with the exception of item 4, which results are not significant since the p-value is higher than the significance level ($p\text{-value}_{14}= 0,367 > 0,05$).**

H3c: When buying luxury products men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as susceptibility to normative influence, than women.

Men responded more positively in items one and four, while women responded more favourably in items two and three. Test results are significant for items one and two ($p\text{-value}_{11}= 0,016 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{12}=0,003 < 0,05$). However, women responded more positively than men in items two and three. This means that **it is not possible to validate the hypothesis** that men, when buying luxury products, are more susceptible to normative influence than women. Only item one followed the two necessary conditions to validate the hypothesis: having an exact sig. level under 0,005 and male having a higher mean rank in the item, and this is not sufficient to confirm H3c.

H3d: When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as uniqueness value, than women.

Men responded much more positively in items two, three and five, while women responded more favourably in items one and four.

Looking at the exact significance in table 19, test results are not significant for all of the items. This means that **the hypothesis is not confirmed and that men, when buying luxury products, are not more driven by uniqueness value than women.**

H4: Women respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity than men.

We can conclude that **women responded in the more positive side of the scale (highest values) in all the items**, while men responded in the lowest side of the scale.

For these data, the Mann-Whitney test results are significant ($p < 0,05$) for all four items ($p\text{-value}_{11, 12, 13, 14}=0,000 < 0,05$). This, alongside with the values of the mean rankings indicates that **women respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity than men, validating H4.**

H5: Men are more loyal and respond more favourably to luxury brand loyalty programs than women.

Men responded in the more positive side of the scale (highest values) in all the items, while women responded with lower values. The Mann-Whitney test results (table 23) are significant ($p < 0,05$) for the first three items ($p\text{-value}_{11}= 0,016 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{12}=0,011 < 0,05$; $p\text{-value}_{13}=0,000 < 0,05$). This, alongside with the values of the mean rankings indicates that **men are more loyal and respond more favourably to luxury brands loyalty programs than women**, with the exception of item 4, which results are not significant ($p\text{-value}_{14}= 0,381 > 0,05$).

| Hypothesis | | Result |
|------------|--|---------------|
| H1 | Women have a higher purchase intention of luxury brands than men. | Validated |
| H2a | When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as hedonic value, than men. | Not validated |
| H2c | When buying luxury products, women are more driven by intrinsic factors, such as materialistic value, than men. | Not validated |
| H3a | When buying luxury products men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as status value, than women. | Validated |
| H3b | When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as conspicuous value, than women. | Validated |
| H3c | When buying luxury products men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as susceptibility to normative influence, than women. | Not validated |
| H3d | When buying luxury products, men are more driven by extrinsic factors, such as uniqueness value, than women. | Not validated |
| H4 | Women respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity than men. | Validated |
| H5 | Men are more loyal and respond more favourably to luxury brand loyalty programs than women. | Validated |

Table 2: Summary of the hypothesis analysed

5. Discussion, Limitations and Future Research

This study was conceptualized in order to understand which are the drivers and motivations to purchase luxury goods by each gender, identify and profile two consumer segments in the luxury market (women and men) and ultimately, provide knowledge to brands for them to communicate more effectively to both genders.

The drivers behind this study resulted from the BLI developed by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and the value dimensions proposed by Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels (2009). The study also followed the classification of motives behind consumers' luxury goods consumption of Jain, Khan and Mishra (2015) that divides them between "intrinsic" factors and "extrinsic" factors. As a result it was studied, through a face-to-face questionnaire, the purchase intention, hedonic value, materialistic value, status value, conspicuous value, susceptibility to normative influence, uniqueness value, promotional activity and brand loyalty.

In this analysis, hypotheses were developed relating women and men with all of the factors/drivers in order to comprehend how gender affects the buying-decision process among consumers of luxury goods. A reliability analysis was performed and quality value and self-identity value hypothesis, having unacceptable internal consistencies, were eliminated from the report.

In this study, **the descriptive statistics revealed that the items' modes varied between 3 and 4 (middle responses style)**, which corresponds to the results of the study conducted by Harzig (2006).

When examining the sample distribution, it became clear that it did not followed a normal distribution, which not allowed the use of parametric tests. This prompted the application of Mann-Whitney tests to analyse the hypotheses, with motivations as dependent variables and gender as the independent one.

Analysing the purchase intention (H1), it became evident that **women have a significantly higher purchase intention than men**. This is in accordance with a study made by Stockburger-Sauer and Teichman (2013) that found women to have a more positive attitude and a higher purchase intention of luxury brands versus non-luxury brands than men.

Jain, Khan and Mishra (2015) classified motives behind consumers' luxury goods consumption as

“intrinsic” (personal) factors and “extrinsic” (social) factors. Intrinsic factors refer to the acquisition of luxury goods mainly for inner satisfaction and extrinsic factors refers to the purchase of those products for social representation, to show their possessions and status. The second hypothesis is related with the intrinsic factors, such as hedonic value (H2a) and materialistic value (H2c). H2b and H2d were not tested due to lack of internal consistency. According to the test results, it was possible to conclude that **women were not more driven by hedonic value than men**, even if they responded slightly more positively in these items than men. This appears to contradict previous research, which suggests that women are more responsive to the uniqueness and hedonic value of luxury brands (Stockburger-Sauer and Teichman, 2013). However, results also show that **women obtain more pleasure purchasing luxury brands than men**. These results can be explained by the fact that in western cultures, gender roles are becoming increasingly blurred. More precisely, research on the dynamics of sex shows that women possess more male traits and that it is more accepted for men to adopt female traits than the contrary (Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, & Lueptow, 2001). Twenge (1997) also shows that maintaining the degree of masculinity in Western cultures constant, the degree of femininity has increased over the years.

Additionally, it needed to be ascertained if women, when buying luxury products, were more driven by materialistic value than men. Materialism involves placing possessions and their acquisition at the centre of life with a belief that obtaining more possessions leads to happiness (Podoshen and Andrzejewski, 2012). Results indicated that **men, when buying luxury products, are more driven by materialistic value than women**. This is consistent with previous research by Eastman *et al.* (1997), Browne and Kaldenberg (1997) and Kamineni (2005) that have all suggested that men may be more materialistic than women. Tse *et al.* (1989) found that men are more materialistic and have a stronger orientation towards external validation, shown through visually portraying accomplishment and prestige by means of material goods. Besides, a study conducted by Segal and Podoshen (2012) determined that males demonstrate more materialistic value and conspicuous product consumption.

The third hypothesis is related with the extrinsic factors, such as status value, conspicuous value, susceptibility to normative influence and uniqueness value, than women. Test results indicate that **men**

are more driven by status value than women, agreeing with the study made by O’Cass & McEwen (2004), that discovered that status consumption and conspicuous consumption are positively correlated and that females are not more status conscious than males. Also, in a mating context, men are more concerned with the visual portrayal of economic achievement than women (Griskevicius *et al.*, 2007).

Research says that conspicuous consumption is pursued in order to enhance one’s prestige in society and can be achieved through public demonstration. Conspicuous consumption also includes expenditures made for the purpose of increasing the ego (Veblen, 1934) coupled with the ostentatious display of wealth (Mason, 1981). The tests reveal that **men, when buying luxury products, are more driven by conspicuousness than women**. This is in line with O’Cass & McEwen (2004) that argue that men are more likely to engage in conspicuous consumption than women to show economic achievement and attract a potential mate. Besides, Segal and Podoshen (2012) say that men demonstrate more conspicuous consumption than women.

The results did not show any effect of gender on susceptibility to normative influence, thus the hypothesis that men are more susceptible to normative influence was not validated. However, literature says that social environment and interpersonal interactions have a deep impact on development of consumers’ buying behaviour (Bearden *et al.*, 1989) and that women are generally described as more interdependent and more concerned with the opinion of others than men (Meyers-Levy, 1988), following communal goals, that are, life goals directed toward social and emotional relationships with others (Meyers-Levy, 1988; Prakash, 1992).

This study also concluded that there is no effect of gender on uniqueness value. For this reason, the hypothesis (H3d) was not validated and men are not more driven by uniqueness value than women. These findings match with the research conducted by Tian, Bearden and Hunter (2001) that found that neither gender nor education had an impact on consumers’ need for uniqueness. Nevertheless, Wiedmann *et al.* (2009) report that women value a multitude of aspects when purchasing luxury brands. More specifically, female consumers dominate segments that represent quality, uniqueness and social value as primary drivers for luxury brand consumption. The contrast between existing literatures might result from the

continuous blur of gender roles and the increasing perceived symbolic and social value of luxury brands by men, which have traditionally been more important for women.

Results also show that, in H2 and H3, **the division between factors as intrinsic (personal) or extrinsic (social) does not create an effect on how gender relates to each variable.** In other words, both women and man can relate or not to the variables, regardless their type.

Genders respond differently to promotional activity. Consequently, marketers use different techniques to create a need or want for a product that is being targeted towards women and men. When it comes to the fashion and accessories luxury market, **women respond more favourably to luxury brands promotional activity than man, which validates the fourth hypothesis.** However, it is important to mention that in the context of fashion clothing, women have been shown to be significantly more involved in the conspicuous consumption of this product than men and that women use apparel more than men to communicate to others their identity (O’Cass, 2001). This may be the reason why test results showed that women respond more positively to luxury ready-to-wear brands’ promotional activity.

In the fifth and final hypothesis, results show that **men are more loyal and respond more positively to luxury brands loyalty programs than women.** If a consumer identifies with a brand, this identification manifests in his or her loyalty toward the brand (Stockburger-Sauer and Teichman, 2013). When it comes to gender and brand loyalty studies, results are contradictory, depending on several factors and changing according to the product category. Douglas (2000) says that women are very loyal to cosmetics and skin products due to the pressure made by the cosmetic industry, marketing agencies and salesmen. Scott and Vitaska (1996) found that women were significantly more likely than men to answer affirmatively that they stick to well known brands when shopping for products. However, Segal and Podoshen (2012) do not support the hypothesis that American women are more brand loyal than men. In addition, that the lines dividing various demographic sections and variables, such as brand loyalty, in the US, are not as strong as they once were. With that said, these results can be a consequence from the product category and the Portuguese culture. Furthermore, the existence of many luxury products, the continuous need to be on trend and unique can decrease women’s loyalty towards luxury brands.

Management Implications

There are several practical implications of these findings. As gender roles are becoming more equal in modern life, managers of luxury brands should be aware of the market changes and what drives each gender to purchase luxury goods. Nevertheless, brands should be aware that women and men value different aspects and are driven to the purchase by distinctive factors.

Marketers should base their strategies on the values different consumer segments seek from luxury brand consumption in order to increase purchase value. When advertising and communicating to male customers, brands should send a message that emphasizes the ego, display wealth or portray status. They should also create specific loyalty programs directed to men. On the other hand, when communicating to female consumers, the brands should engage in different types of promotional activity that avoid comparative messages and focus on detailed and visual information.

Regardless the gender, retailers should constantly work on creating a good relationship with its customers and a positive shopping experience. They should attend the needs of each particular market and formulate effective strategies to market their products and services that were designed to suit male and female customers' preferences. Marketers also need to be aware that the product category is of vital importance for a consumer's brand response and for her/his purchase intention.

Limitations of the study

As all researches show some type of limitations, this study is no exception. For this reason, there are some constrictions that need to be mentioned.

A face-to-face relatively long questionnaire caused some respondents time constrains. Alongside with the need to ensure participant cooperation, the questionnaire was responded with rush and lack of analysis, which meant that the answers might not be accurate. The second limitation concerns the type of sample. Purposive samples, irrespective of the type of purposive sampling used, can be highly disposed to researcher bias. The small size of the sample, because of the nature of the difficulty to find people that buy luxury products, can also be a restriction to the validity of results. Furthermore, it only includes people living in Lisbon, which may not be representative of the entire Portuguese population. Value

systems and consumer lifestyles may be different in other parts of the country. Moreover, luxury values were examined in the context of Portugal only. It is crucial that the reader understands the results cannot carry over to consumers of other countries. The third limitation is that this study only concerns two product categories: ready-to-wear and accessories. The results may be different when studying other type of products. The fourth constraint concerns the understanding of the marketing aspects and items presented in the questionnaire, meaning that some of the items may not be clear to all respondents, giving some unsubstantiated answers.

Future research

Further research on the topic should include a bigger sample and involve additional product categories such as consumer electronics or luxury brand services. Using focus groups in future studies could also be helpful on obtaining consumers thoughts about which makes them purchase luxury products. This would also be very helpful to relate promotional activity and gender, since showing visual adds and examples would gather more conscious and well-informed responses about what attracts each gender to the purchase. It would also be relevant to further study the impact of age, instead of gender, on the buying-decision process of luxury products. Selecting age categories and, analysing what drives each of them to the purchase, would provide interesting insides for the luxury market. Finally, this study only focused on offline purchases. Future research could also examine gender's role in shopping motivation and acquisition decisions online, to see which differences and similarities are found between the two types of purchase.

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