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Fashion marketing of luxury brands: Recent research issues and contributions

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ABSTRACT

This introduction briefly summarizes each of the fifteen articles included in this special issue on fashion marketing of luxury brands and provides a rationale for the inclusion of each article. The articles are grouped by topic—luxury status/values, luxury consumer behavior, luxury brand management, and luxury brand counterfeiting—even though many of the articles include information relevant to at least one other topic. With authors representing thirteen different countries (and probably more if country of origin were to be considered), this issue on marketing of luxury brands is truly international in scope.

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This *JBR* special issue on fashion marketing strategies of luxury brands comprises selected papers from research reports presented at the 2010 Global Marketing Conference that took place in Hotel Okura Tokyo (Tokyo), Japan. The objective of this special issue is to bring together international scholars from different disciplines and different countries working to advance knowledge on the fashion marketing and consumption of luxury brands. The variety in country-of-origin of the authors in this special issue indicates that this truly is an international sample of scholars. Authors from Australia (3), Belgium (6), China (7), France (2), India (2), Japan (1), Korea (7), Russia (1), Singapore (1), Thailand (1), the United Kingdom (3), and the United States (13) contributed to this issue.

The luxury industry is relatively small in terms of the number of companies, but punches far above its weight both in terms of sales and more importantly, influence. The best design, the best materials, the best merchandising, and the best packaging occur in the luxury industry, and hence luxury brands frequently lead the way for the rest of the marketing world. The role of fashion marketing of luxury brands is an area in need of new developments, theories, and knowledge in light of the trends toward global luxury and fashion markets.

To that end, this selection of papers serves to increase the reader's understanding of the strategies needed to effectively market to the luxury brand sector. Certainly, the reader may wish to view these articles as a starting point in understanding theory and research in the

fashion marketing of luxury brands, and go on to investigate additional references in the subject matter. [Fig. 1](#) describes the research scope of papers included in this special issue. What follows is a brief summary of each article and the place it occupies in [Fig. 1](#).

1. Luxury status/values

1.1. *Between the mass and the class: antecedents of the “bandwagon” luxury consumption behavior*

Minas N. Kastanakis and George Balabanis ([Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2012—this issue](#)) examine the impact of a number of psychological factors on consumers' propensity to engage in the “bandwagon” type of luxury consumption. (The bandwagon effect refers to the extent to which demand for a product increases because others are consuming the product. This tendency may be driven by the need to be associated with, and to be identified as being, fashionable or stylish. Consumers jump on the bandwagon so they won't be left behind!) Through development and empirically confirming a conceptual model of bandwagon consumption of luxury products, the authors show that a consumer's interdependent self-concept underlies bandwagon luxury consumption. The relationship between interdependent self-concept and bandwagon consumption is mediated by the level of a consumer's status-seeking predispositions, susceptibility to normative influence, and need for uniqueness. A primary contribution of this research demonstrates that psychological constructs explain a large part of bandwagon luxury consumption and can be used as inputs in the development of marketing strategies.

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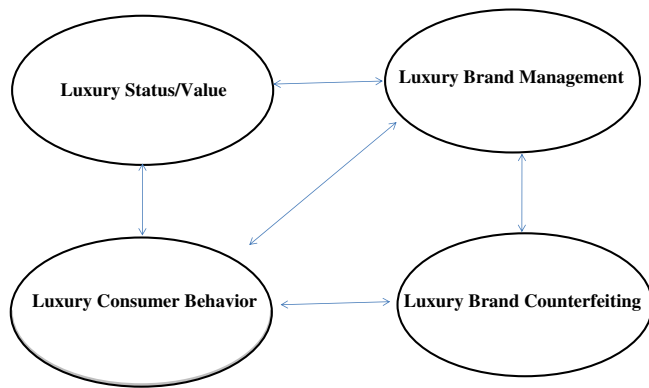


Fig. 1. Fashion marketing and consumption of luxury brands.

1.2. Interpersonal effects on fashion consciousness and status consumption moderated by materialism in metropolitan men

Despite dramatic changes in male fashion consumption over the last two decades, consumer research has largely ignored the issue of status consumption, especially in the male market. [Aurathai Lertwannawit and Rujirutana Mandhachitara \(2012-this issue\)](#) study the direct and indirect effects (i.e., by way of fashion consciousness) of self-monitoring and susceptibility to interpersonal influence have on status consumption. Interesting findings of path analysis provide insights into interpersonal effects on status consumption. Materialism values moderate the relationship between self-monitoring and/or susceptibility to interpersonal influence on status consumption: for high-materialism consumers, susceptibility to interpersonal influence alone has an indirect effect on status consumption by way of fashion consciousness; for low-materialism consumers, self-monitoring is an additional antecedent of status consumption. Marketers attempting to penetrate the male metropolitan market can use these results to identify appropriate communication channels and message content for high- and low-materialism customers.

1.3. Comparing the importance of luxury value perceptions in cross-national contexts

[Paurav Shukla and Keyoor Purani \(2012-this issue\)](#) provide empirical support to the often conceptualized but not-yet-tested framework of luxury value perceptions in a cross-national context. The study compares the luxury value perceptions (i.e., self-directed symbolic/expressive, other-directed symbolic/expressive, experiential/hedonic, utilitarian/functional, and cost/sacrifice) among British and Indian consumers, providing a rich comparative context between collectivist and individualistic markets. The results support the notion that several luxury value perceptions may be highly influential among all cultures and countries, but their degree of influence may differ dramatically. The findings suggest that consumers in collectivist markets use simpler selection criteria for measuring the value of a luxury brand than consumers in individualistic markets. These results can be used by luxury brand managers to develop a coherent and integrated long-term global strategy that takes into account country-specific requirements.

1.4. Impact of self on attitudes toward luxury brands among teens

In this research, [Luciana DeAraujo Gil, Kyoung-Nan Kwon, Linda Good, and Lester W. Johnson \(2012-this issue\)](#) investigate how social consumption motivations affect teenagers' attitudes toward luxury brands, how teens' self concepts can influence social consumption motivations, and whether peer pressure affects this relationship. The authors also look at materialism's influence on teenagers' social consumption motivations and attitudes toward luxury brands. Key

contributions of this research include the demonstration that materialistic orientation is a powerful force in developing more positive attitudes towards luxury brands among teenagers. Also, even though the desire for wealth and material ownership is positively associated with social incentives to consume (i.e., social consumption motivation), teenagers with clear self-beliefs have a stronger tendency to resist social motivations to consume; the clearer they are about themselves, the less they attend to external sources and stimuli. This paper segues to the next section as it fits in both the luxury status/value and the luxury consumer behavior categories.

2. Luxury consumer behavior

2.1. Consumer enactments of archetypes using luxury brands

[Carol M. Megehee and Deborah F. Spake \(2012-this issue\)](#) explore the meaning of luxury brands through the use of visual narrative art created from consumer blogs. The article describes how to use creation of visual narrative art as a qualitative research tool. Mapping contexts and stories that blog entries describe reveals the nature of the brand, the blogger (i.e., the consumer of the luxury brand in the blog), and interpretations by the visual narrative artists. This study extends the consumer storytelling literature that follows from creating visual narrative art and its use for deepening understanding of consumer reports of their enactments of brand myths.

2.2. Purchase intention for luxury brands: a cross-cultural comparison

[Qin Bian and Sandra Forsythe \(2012-this issue\)](#) examine the effects of individual characteristics (i.e., consumers' need for uniqueness and self-monitoring) and brand-associated variables (i.e., social function attitudes toward luxury brands and affective attitude) on U.S. and Chinese consumers' purchase intention for luxury brands. (Social function attitudes, as they relate to luxury brands, involve consumers' self-expression and self-presentation to express their individuality (e.g., need for uniqueness) and exhibit their social standing (e.g., self monitoring). Affective attitudes are a powerful predictor of behavior because they involve consumers' feelings or emotions. In addition to the social function of self-expression and self-presentation attitudes, consumers choose luxury brands because they provide hedonic rewards and sensory fulfillment.) In this cross-cultural study, self-monitoring positively influences social function attitudes toward luxury brands. Social function attitudes toward luxury brands positively influence consumers' purchase intention through affective attitude. Affective attitude plays an important mediating role between social function attitudes toward luxury brands and purchase intentions.

2.3. Understanding luxury consumption in China: consumer perceptions of best-known brands

[Lingjing Zhan and Yanqun He \(2012-this issue\)](#) investigate the underlying motivations for luxury consumption among Chinese middle-class consumers by testing the relationships between psychological traits (i.e., value consciousness, susceptibility to normative influence, and the need for uniqueness) and attitudes towards best-known luxury brands. Findings suggest that as consumers become more value conscious, they evaluate the best-known brands more favorably. Consumers with high susceptibility to normative influences exhibit more positive brand attitudes, suggesting that social influence is an important driver for luxury consumption. The relationship between the need for uniqueness and brand attitudes depends on consumer knowledge; as consumers learn more about different luxury brands, they evaluate the best-known brands more negatively as uniqueness-seeking becomes a more important goal. Findings offer a unique insight into consumer perceptions of luxury brands and

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