

Consumer Buying behaviour towards Luxury Handbags

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ABSTRACT

Consumer buying behaviour towards Luxury handbags are important to learn for developing effective marketing strategies by the organizations. The present study attempts to present a conceptual paper for the comprehension on different perspectives of consumer buying of luxury products. The factors responsible for buying of luxury products provide the insight for the marketers to plan the touch points for the various purchase processes. Various theories and researches have been worked upon for enhancing the concept of consumer behaviour. Also the purchase decisions of luxury products require the strategic marketing plan. The study may contribute to the future researches in academia and corporate.

Keywords: *Luxury, Consumer, attitude , perception*

INTRODUCTION

Consumer behavior research refers to the methodical and scientific examination of how individuals go about choosing, acquiring, utilizing, and discarding products and services to meet their desires. It's evident that an understanding of consumer behavior significantly influences marketing strategies, as it aligns with the fundamental marketing concept that businesses exist to fulfil customer needs. Luxury brands provide consumers with a feeling of extravagance and come at a high cost for the individual. Despite possessing attributes such as exceptional quality, a rich history of craftsmanship, distinctive style, a premium price tag, exclusivity, and a global reputation, luxury brand products serve as a symbol of social class within society.

The willingness to buy is used interchangeably for purchase intention (Phau et al., 2009). The willingness to buy in the association between attitude and behavior is determined by the amount of effort required to exercise behavior (Bagozzi et al. 1990). willingness to buy, instead of formation of

attitude. The willingness to buy is strongly associated with actual behaviour (Zeithaml et al., 1996). This relationship has been studied for luxury brands (Hidayat & Diwasasri, 2013); intellectual property (Xiao, 2006). Although significant relationship exist between willingness to buy and actual behaviour, when it comes to counterfeit goods, customers tends to become susceptible. Uncertainties, in terms of quality and longevity, in counterfeit purchases remain high. These concerns often fades the willingness to buy counterfeit goods (Liao & Hsieh, 2013). The factors that affect the consumer buying behaviour towards luxury handbags has been studied under this study.

CUSTOMER ATTITUDE TOWARDS COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS

The influential role of customer attitude on the final purchase decision has been explained in theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). As per these theories, the buying behaviour of the individual is ascertained by the

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purchase intention, and this in turn is influenced by the attitude towards a product. The theoretical description of attitude stated by Huang et al. (2004) describe it as *“learned predisposition to respond to a situation in a favourable or unfavourable way”*.

The significant impact of customer attitude on the ultimate purchasing decision has been elucidated in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) and the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). According to these theories, an individual’s buying behavior is determined by their purchase intention, which, in turn, is influenced by their attitude toward a product. The theoretical definition of attitude, as described by Huang et al. (2004), characterizes it as a *“learned predisposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a situation.”*

One explanation for this behavior can be attributed to the research conducted by Ramayah et al. (2002). Their study indicates that customers tend to exhibit more positive attitudes toward counterfeit products when genuine brands charge excessively high prices. Supporting evidence for the findings of Ramayah et al. (2002) has been presented by Penz and Stottinger (2005), who assert that lower prices for products with a similar appearance attract consumers towards counterfeit items.

Given the lower prices of counterfeit products, the associated financial risk decreases substantially. Moreover, buyers of counterfeit products typically do not prioritize their expectations regarding product quality (Phau & Teah, 2009). The attitude of a counterfeit product purchaser remains positive as long as the essential product functions are fulfilled, and its symbolic value is achieved, as noted by Eisend & Schuchert-Güler. Fashion accessories, as a product category, even allow for functionality testing before purchase, as suggested by Bian & Veloutsou (2017). Viot et al. (2014) observe a shift in attitude towards a willingness to buy counterfeit products, driven by customers’ latent desire for retaliation against large corporations.

TOP OF FORM

During their investigation into generational cohorts, Hanzaee and Taghipourian (2012) discovered that Generation Y consumers, despite considering price as an indicator of quality, maintain a favorable attitude toward counterfeit products. Generation

Y consumers tend to place importance on social acceptance and approval from their peer groups or families, leading them to develop a similar stance toward counterfeit goods. Counterfeit products offer an attainable option for customers who may not have the means to afford authentic brands but still desire the prestige and satisfaction associated with owning such products (Liao & Hsieh, 2013). Consequently, the more positive the attitude towards counterfeit products, the greater the willingness to purchase them.

SEARCH FOR NOVELTY

The quest for novel and varied products continually captivates customers (Wang et al., 2005). Wee et al. (1995) identified a spirit of experimentation emerging among consumers due to the affordability of counterfeit products. As the reduced cost of counterfeit items minimizes the financial risk associated with their purchase (Phau & Teah, 2009), consumers then seek novelty as a key factor in their decision to opt for counterfeit products (Cheng et al., 2011).

Hidayat and Diwasasri (2013) discovered that there was no connection between a customer’s novelty-seeking trait and their ultimate purchase intention. Nevertheless, they contended that the pursuit of novelty does influence a customer’s attitude toward counterfeit products. Similar conclusions were drawn by Ha and Tam (2015) in the context of luxury fashion counterfeit products. However, it was noted that novelty seeking turned out to be the least influential factor affecting a customer’s attitude. While Wee et al. (1995) concluded that product attributes exert a more substantial impact on customer attitudes based on their findings, they recommended not underestimating the significance of psychographic variables, including novelty, in shaping customer attitudes toward counterfeit products.

CUSTOMERS SEEKING STATUS

Individuals use their purchases to symbolize their status and communicate their significance within their peer groups (Husic & Cicic, 2009). Attitudes toward the consumption of status goods are tied to the display of affluence, encompassing the symbolic representations of an individual’s social position and reputation (Eng & Bogaert, 2010). According to a theoretical definition provided by Eastman et

al. (1999), status consumption is described as “the motivational process by which individuals strive to enhance their social status by consuming products that signify status, both to themselves and to those around them.” It is deduced that customers who seek status when making product purchases primarily do so for conspicuous purposes (Scott et al., 2013). However, building upon their earlier definition of status consumption, Eastman and Eastman (2015) put forth the idea that customers seeking status through their purchases may or may not be doing so for conspicuous purposes. This motivation for status consumption can stem from external factors such as social acceptance or internal factors like personality traits (Eastman & Eastman, 2015).

Customers are increasingly mindful of their accomplishments (Phau & Teah, 2009) and actively seek out brands that align with their sense of self-identity (Harun et al., 2012). According to the proposition by Yoo and Lee (2009), consumers purchase high-end products to convey their social status and personal identity, ultimately driven by a desire to understand “how others perceive them.”

Nevertheless, loyalty among status-seeking customers doesn’t motivate them to erode the brand equity and reputation of their preferred brand by opting for counterfeit products (Phau et al., 2009). Despite the absence of a direct link between status consumption and attitudes toward counterfeit products, some customers still opt for counterfeit items. Norashikin (2009) argues that such behavior arises because counterfeit products are often nearly indistinguishable from their authentic counterparts, making it challenging to discern between them. However, the congruence between brand image and self-image shapes a negative attitude toward counterfeit products (Liao & Hsieh, 2013).

SENSE OF INTEGRITY

An individual’s stance is shaped by their personal moral outlook, as articulated by Kohlberg (1976). Moral principles, including integrity, play a critical role in determining whether a customer engages in unethical behavior, as emphasized by Steenhaut & Van Kenhove (2006). Concerning integrity, scholars hold two contrasting viewpoints. Firstly, customers may, on occasion, rationalize their actions through their “non-normative consumption behavior”

because they do not perceive their conduct as morally objectionable (Ang et al., 2001). In cases where moral values are absent, and buying counterfeit products is considered morally acceptable, individuals may be more inclined to continue purchasing such items (Poddar et al., 2012). Second, according to Wang et al. (2005), integrity or moral values signify an individual’s “degree of ethical concern.” Furthermore, this indicates that individuals with strong moral convictions tend to hold a negative view of counterfeit products and, consequently, display a reduced willingness to purchase them (Cordell et al., 1996; Phau et al., 2009b).

Customers who demonstrate a sense of “responsibility and integrity” when making purchases tend to harbor unfavorable views toward counterfeit products, as revealed by Jiang et al. (2019). Liao and Hsieh (2013) observe that customers who score highly in terms of “ethical contemplation” and “compliance with the law” also exhibit a negative disposition towards acquiring counterfeit products. However, Phau et al. (2009b) contend that attitude alone may not be a comprehensive indicator of a customer’s purchasing behavior, suggesting that individuals with high levels of integrity may occasionally still choose to purchase counterfeit products.

PERCEIVED RISK

The concept of perceived risk is commonly defined in the literature as pertaining to a customer’s perception of the uncertainties and potential consequences associated with a product purchase, as outlined by Dowling & Staelin (1994). In the case of counterfeit purchases, there are significant risks to consider, including financial and social risks, as highlighted by Sunitha et al. (2012), and the potential for legal consequences since counterfeit purchases are illegal according to the law, as noted by De Matos et al. (2007).

(2011) have found that social risk carries greater weight in shaping a negative customer attitude toward counterfeit purchases in contrast to financial risk. Existing literature corroborates the notion that the perception of risk varies depending on the product category. For products where compromising on quality and warranty is deemed unacceptable, such as automobiles, consumers are highly likely to exhibit a negative attitude towards counterfeits, as

elucidated by Kotler & Keller (2011). In such cases, no customer would willingly take such a risk. However, for low or moderately involved products, customers may be more inclined to take risks, as noted by Pires et al. (2004), because they are aware that the product is likely to be of inferior quality (Wang et al., 2005).

Customers take steps to reduce the perceived risk by buying possibly the best quality products and/or getting affirmation from their peers or reference group (Yeung & Morris, 2001). Bian and Moutinho (2009) affirms that there is an inverse relationship between perceived risk and probability of consuming counterfeit products. Along with monetary risks, customers also risk damaging their self-concept while buying counterfeit products (Veloutsou & Bian, 2008). However, such a risk is more visible for fashion and accessories, as the fashion and related accessories are prone to evolving patterns, trends, and phases of the product life cycle (Joy et al., 2012).

When considering the comprehension of risks connected with purchasing counterfeit items, certain authors delineate a direct correlation between perceived risk and the intention to make a purchase (Michaelidou & Christodoulides, 2011; Liao & Hsieh, 2013). Conversely, some authors have chosen an indirect approach, linking these two constructs through attitudes toward counterfeit products (Koklic, 2011). Thus, the current study endeavors to explore the influence of perceived risk on a customer's attitude toward counterfeit products

CONCLUSION

The customers buy luxury goods for various reasons, most of which revolve around the intense emotions linked to acquiring costly tangible items. The perceived risk, search for novelty, sense of integrity, attitude towards counterfeited products are some factors that influence buying behaviour for luxury handbags. Regardless of their financial capacity, the customers might opt to possess luxury handbags solely to experience a feeling of joy.

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