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### STUDYING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF BOTH GENDERS ON PURCHASING LUXURY APPAREL IN SAUDI ARABIA

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#### **ABSTRACT**

With the time passing the "luxury" concept has been spreading the globe and consumers are heavily hiding toward its products and services. The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of genders on brand persuasion and brand value of luxury brands. This study will help luxury brands managers in Saudi Arabia to understand the purchasing behaviour of both genders by studying their psychological behaviours. An online survey with dedicated questionnaire is designed for deeper analysis and understandings of the consumer's behaviours and consumptions toward luxury apparel products. The data were collected from 228 respondents between male and female from Saudi Arabia. The results indicated the major differences in the purchasing behaviour for both gender and the theoretical analysis about the perception of the value of the Saudi consumers were discussed.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

Luxury was first found in religious churches, temples, pagodas and Egyptian pyramidal tombs - through sacrificing the wealth attempting to buy mercy and tributes to almighty God - by the time luxury became the signal of rank in all aristocratic societies (Podolny, 2008). Originally, the word "LUXURY" came from the Latin word 'luxus' it means sumptuousness, opulence, and exuberance. The concept of luxury existed since the dawn of civilization and it evolved in different forms and at different levels, luxury products that relevant to business is one form of LUXURY. 'Ordinary of the Extraordinary' that's mean luxury is the images of the lives of the rich and powerful and the luxury DNA has been found and still in the history of aristocracy's society.

Globalization has helped to tread luxury around the world, and now luxury creates social stratification in countries in which it did not previously exist (Bastien & Kapferer, 2012) and the accelerating in demand for luxury brands was recognized in the past decade especially in Asia. Moreover, seven of the hundred global brands were luxury products: Hermes, Louis Vuitton, Tiffany, Cartier, Gucci, Armani, and Burberry. The absolute concept of luxury needs no brand. When the question 'what examples of luxury spontaneously come to your mind?' answers were lifestyle elements of the very rich or inaccessible product (private jets, helicopters...etc.). Instead, if the interviewer were asked 'what brands come to your mind when you hear the word "luxury"?' The answers will refer to products or services with the same list worldwide (Louis Vuitton, Chanel, Gucci, Rolex, Ferrari, Dior, Ritz-Carlton...etc.) (Kapferer, 2015)

The consumer perception to pursue luxury is a reflection of the self-image and social image as they want to develop and enhance through the uniqueness of luxury (Tian, Bearden, & Hunter, 2001).

The need of distinctiveness is what influences the consumer purchasing decisions, and for the sake of distinctiveness people display a different level of needs (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). Regarding the uniqueness theory of consumers, it is unpleasant to have too much similarity or dissimilarity among individuals if they want to maintain the reasonable uniqueness of themselves (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). With the help of materialism, consumer able to determine an identity and gain prestige in the social circle (Belk, 1988). Moreover, the consumption of luxury products is enriched by the self-image and social image, those two are convolutedly related and cannot be divided this is a cognitively-based attitude. The affective based attitudes were consumers tend to purchase luxury to satisfy their emotional or hedonic desire (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004).

The customer brand equity concentrates the relationship on quality, visibility, attitude, emotion, liking, and loyalty to a certain brand and it helps brand managers in formulating a brand strategy (Capon, Berthon, Hulbert, & Pitt, 2001). Brand image in marketing is a correlation the emotional or rational perception of a consumer that attach them with a particular brand, and it is the consumer awareness of brand identity (Keller, 2003) (Liu, Liu, & Lin, 2013). What a company provides as brand meaning and what they seek to present to the target market as a brand characteristic is the brand identity (Kapferer, 2008).

The brand image is the social image of a brand personality and an element of it (Boo, Busser, & Baloglu, 2009). The brand image is emphasized as a former of value and loyalty (Cretu & Brodie, 2007). However, explaining the customer value as a choice that customer makes a brand depending on a balance he/she noticed between the product utility and its price, where the value that perceived serves as a mediator between behaviour intention and quality evaluation (Sweeney, Soutar, & Johnson, 1999).

However, with these luxurious famous brands spreading worldwide, a review of the existing literature about luxury shows the Concept of Luxury brand, how consumer behave toward luxury products, persuasion tactics of a brand, and what is the value of luxury brands and products. This study examines both gender males and females consumers purchasing behaviour and understanding the preferences of both gender consumers while searching for luxury apparel in Saudi Arabia. By developing quantitative analytical surveys which explores the consumers purchasing behaviour.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study used online questionnaire survey approach to identify the consumer behaviour toward the luxury apparels in Saudi Arabia. Nine questions have been developed in the study. Nine questions are quantitative questions to clarify and focus on gathering numerical data about the behaviour of consumers toward luxury apparels, and one qualitative question is an open-ended question that focused on consumer's choice of luxury brands to deeply understand the relation of consumption and perception toward luxury brands.

### ***Sample Size and Population***

This study has targeted males and females all over Saudi Arabia, between the ages of 20-40 years old. The data were collected through an online survey and gathered 228 respondents, including 75 males and 153 females.

### ***Designing the Questionnaire***

A survey was developed included two different sets of questions that been adopted in this study. An open-ended question about the most liked luxury apparel brand to the Saudi consumers. A set of nine multiple choice questions to emphasize the purchasing behaviour toward these brands. The survey was made with both English and Arabic language using Google forms and distributed online to the samples.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study is to understand the purchase behaviour of males and females in Saudi Arabia specifically towards luxury brand apparels. A structured questionnaire was administered to the target sample online and overall 228 responses were participated in this study. Table 1 tabulates the characteristic of the participant, out of 228 respondents (67%) are females while (33%) are males, which reflected that females are more inclined towards buying luxury apparels compared to male. The majority of the respondents were between (20-25) years about 43%, follow by (36-40) years about 25%. This signified the younger consumers are more particular about wearing luxury apparels compared to older consumers.

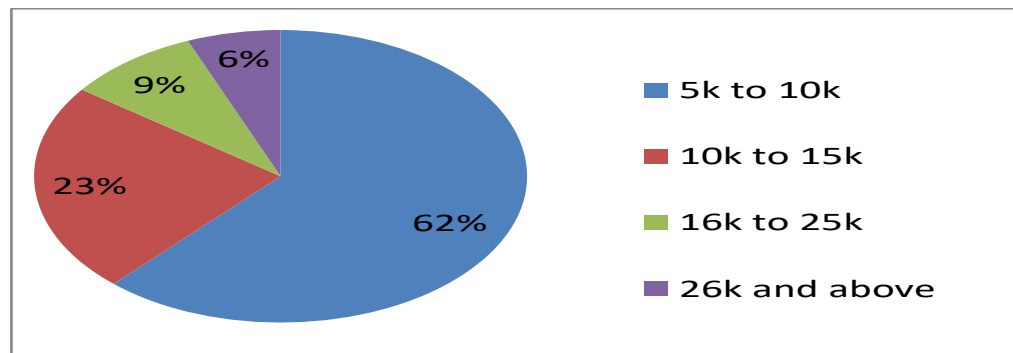
**Table 1.**The gender and age of the respondents

<b>Characterises</b>		<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	75	32.89
	<b>Female</b>	153	67.11

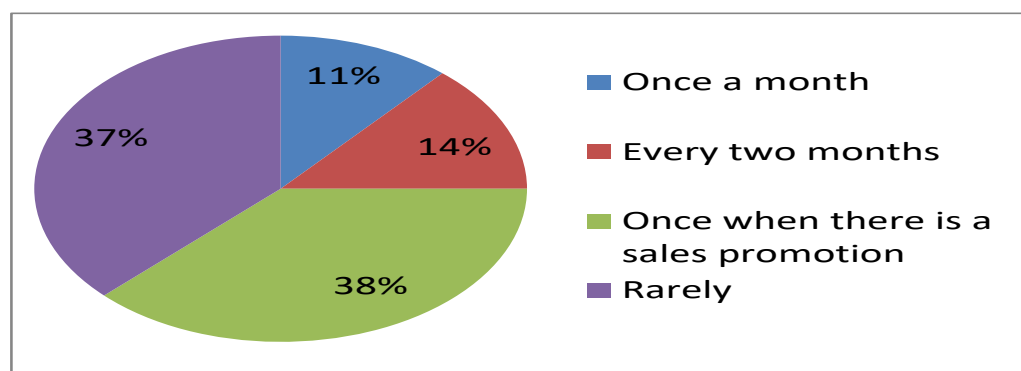
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>20 to 25 Years old</b>	97	42.54
	<b>26 to 30 Years old</b>	40	17.54
	<b>31 to 35 Years old</b>	34	14.91
	<b>36 to 40 Years old</b>	57	25.00

Fig. 1 shows the majority of the respondents about 62% fall under the income range of 5000-1000 SAR per month, which can be due to the fact that luxury apparels are not so expensive, compared to luxury jewellery, shoes and bags which are bought more frequently by people of the higher income range.

Fig. 2 shows the majority of the respondent about 38% only purchasing luxury apparels due to sales promotions, which shows that people prefer to spend less for purchasing even from luxury brands. Moreover, about 37% of the respondents pursued luxury rarely. There are 14% and 11% of the participants pursued it every two or once a month respectively.



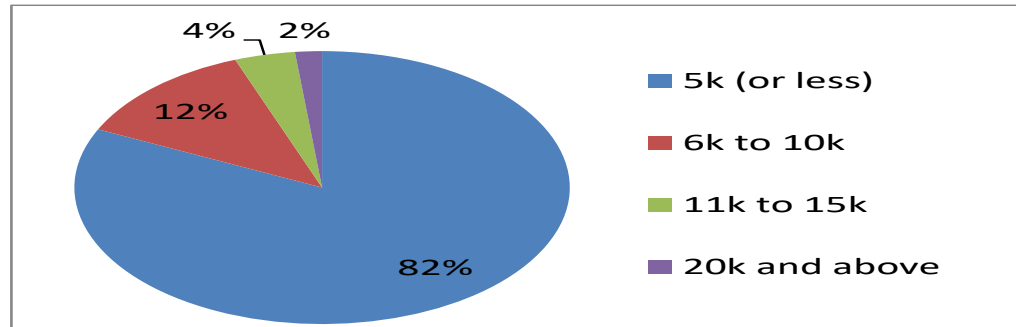
**Fig. 1.** Monthly income of the participants



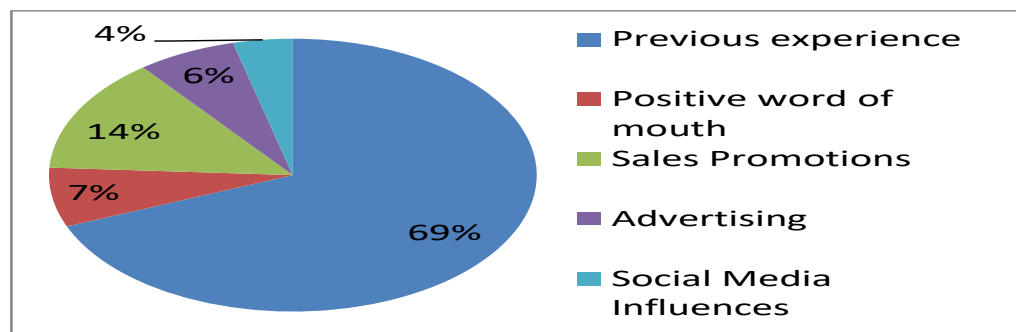
**Fig 2** The frequency of the participants shop for luxury brands

Fig. 3 shows the majority of the respondents about 82% spend less than 5000 SAR when they visit luxury boutiques, that because most of them as shown in the previous question due to sales promotions or it can revert to minimizing their spending in each visit.

The majority of the respondents mentioned their favourite luxury brands are in order first (Channel), second (Burberry), third (Gucci), fourth (Dior), fifth (Louis Vuitton). In a continuation of the question, another question has been asked “why do you like to purchase the above brand?” The majority of the respondents purchase those brands due to previous experience by 69%, then sales promotions by 14% as shown in Fig. 4.



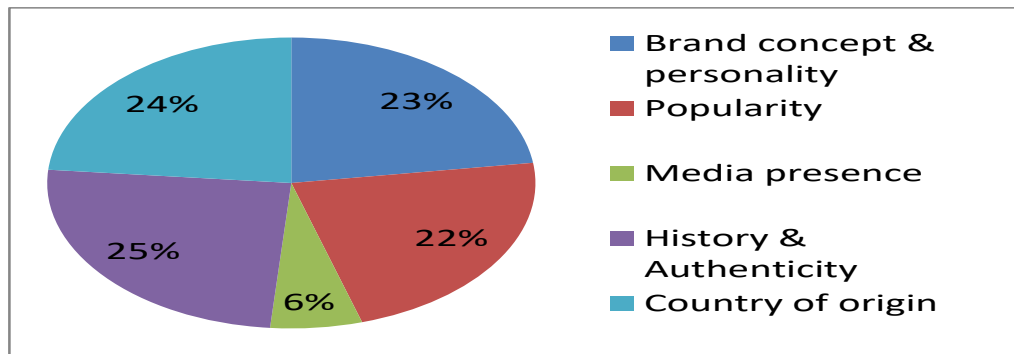
**Fig. 3.** The budget allocation for each visit



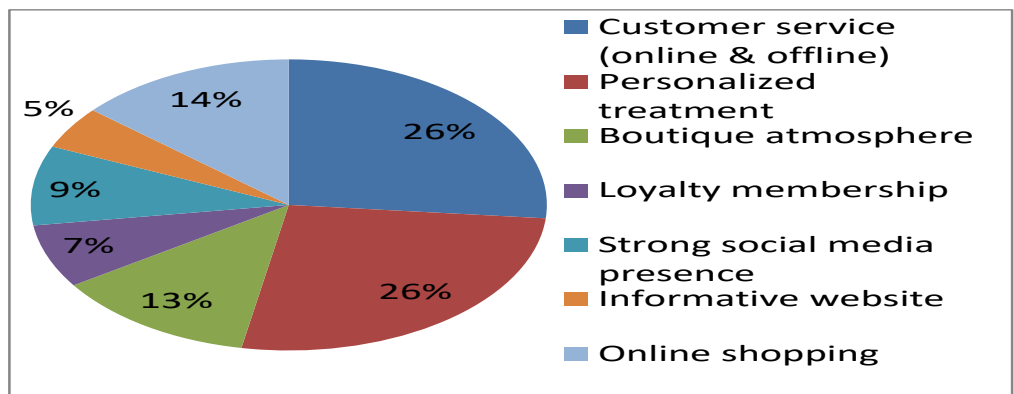
**Fig. 4.** The reasons of purchase from luxury brand

Fig. 5 shows the media has the least attention of brand strength in the consumer perception of luxury brands by 6%, where the factors that strengthen a luxury brand the most are History & Authenticity by 25% of the brand in the perception of the Saudi Arabian consumers. Moreover, other key factors have increased the strength of the brand and they are a country of origin by 24%, brand concept & personality 23%, and popularity of the brand about 22%.

Fig. 6 signifies that the majority of the Saudi Arabian consumer's respondents agreed that the key factors that make purchasing luxury brand an excellent experience are both the customer service and personalized treatment of the brand, and that is a good key for luxury brand management to focus on. Other key factors that attract customers to purchase luxury apparels are online shopping where most of the customers prefer it these days contribute by 14%. As for loyalty membership, informative website, boutique atmosphere, and strong social media presence considered as secondary key factors.

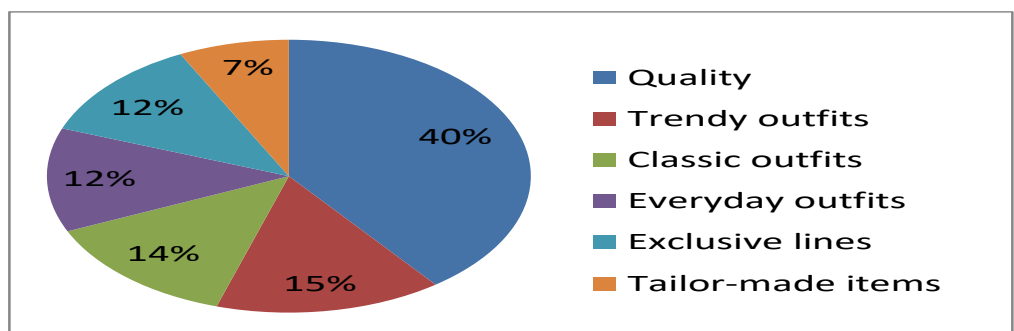


**Fig. 5.** The strengths of the specific brand



**Fig 6** The key tactics for an excellent brand experience

Fig. 7 shows majority of the respondent about 40% purchasing luxury products because it's distinguished quality either it's trendy, classic, everyday outfits or exclusive lines. This demonstrate that consumers in Saudi Arabia are seeking for more functional and practical products that long last, and this can also explain why the majority of consumers visit luxury stores once a month or rarely and spend less than 5000 SAR in one visit.



**Fig 7** The reasons for shopping for luxury clothing

A long time ago the luxury word has been known as a characteristic of only aristocratic society. With the time luxury spread the globe and became 'Ordinary of the Extraordinary' images of the life of the rich and powerful, and the concept of "luxury" kept the same. The rarity principle is the heart of luxury goods where consumers need to be unique and different. The scarcity

of luxury is what gives it its unique characteristic. The consumer's behaviour toward luxury products come from a self-image and social image where consumers want to develop their uniqueness by being different and their perception of luxury make them believe that, and their distinctiveness shows different levels of needs. While managers of the brands develop persuasion tactics that can merely change consumer's actions toward one brand on another, by the time consumers learned how to evoke persuasion knowledge to resist those persuasions tactics. That can reveal both a positive and negative actions from consumers toward markets and agencies. Moreover, the brand's name and symbol are what give the brands its value and uniqueness, however, the brand value in the consumer's perception is the emotional and functional value that consumer perceives from a brand. Value for brand managers means the equity of the brands, it's the relationship between consumers and the quality, visibility, attitude, emotion, liking, and loyalty to a certain brand what helps the managers to formulate a good brand strategy.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study has shown a major difference in the purchasing behaviour of both males and females were the majority of the females consumers purchase luxury apparel product whenever there are sales promotions. On the other hand majority of the male's consumers are rarely purchasing luxury apparel product, where few of them are sales promotions customers. This study has also highlighted that both genders had nearly the same preferences while searching for luxury apparel. First, the values of luxury brands in their perception were the History & Authenticity, country of origin, brand concept & personality, and popularity of the brand. Second, the key factors for an excellent purchasing experience are customers' service and personalized treatment. However, there are several factors that cannot be underestimated as online shopping, loyalty membership, informative website, boutique atmosphere, and strong social media presence. Where it may consider as a way of marketing for them because most of the Saudi consumers as what shown in the results were purchasing luxury apparel based on previous experience and sales promotions. Third, consumers of luxury goods in Saudi Arabia are more influenced by the price and functionality of the brand and its products, not the brand position and status. In addition, most of them purchase luxury products because it's distinguished quality. That explains why consumers visit luxury stores once a month or rarely and spend less than 5000 SAR in one visit.

The power of persuasion does not affect the consumer's actions toward luxury brands, where people tend to purchase luxury either for social image or uniqueness and the value of luxury brands in the consumer's perception is more emotional as liking, loyalty, or something that Inherited by generations. Saudi Arabian consumers are much more functional society even in the fashion and luxuries industry.

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