

Antecedents to Luxury Purchase Intentions of Young South African Consumers

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ABSTRACT

This study seeks to explicate the antecedents to the luxury purchase intentions of the under-researched but highly influential millennial consumer. The paper firstly verifies the value perceptions conceptual model as it relates to luxury value. Secondly, an extension of this model is proposed through incorporating the constructs of self-congruity, brand consciousness, and social media marketing, each of which has been found to be a predictor of luxury consumption in other markets. A quantitative research study was conducted where structural equation modeling was employed to establish the validity and reliability of the conceptual model and constructs and to test the related hypotheses. Key findings of this research revealed that each of the constructs is positively correlated to the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials, with materialism being the most significant predictor.

Keywords: Luxury purchase intentions, Millennials, Value perceptions, Self-congruity, Brand consciousness, Social media marketing.

INTRODUCTION

A pronounced share of global consumer product sales is accounted for by luxury brands (Bian & Forsythe, 2012), with personal luxury goods – “the ‘core of the core’ of luxury” (D’Arpizio, Levato, Zito, & De Montgolfier, 2014, pg. 3) leading this market. D’Arpizio et al. (2014) posit that this personal luxury goods market has reached a value of €223 billion in 2014, indicating that it has tripled in size over the previous two decades.

Deloitte (2014) have forecasted that emerging markets (such as Latin America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa) are where the growth in luxury sales will occur as they project that these markets will account for 25% of the total market by 2025 (up from 19% in 2013). Economic development and increased affluence as a result of a growing middle-class place Sub-Saharan Africa second to only Asia Pacific in terms of market growth, and as a result, Deloitte believes that this market is the frontier for longer-term growth for luxury brands (Deloitte, 2014).

Global consumption behavior has been influenced by the convergence of local and global culture. Doss & Robinson (2013) believe that this convergence leads to a better comparability of cross-cultural value perception and the effect thereof on consumer purchase decisions. Chattalas & Shukla (2015) posit that this purchase decision is ultimately derived from the value that the consumer gleans from a product or service. As a result of its subjective nature, researchers are still debating the value on which luxury is based, (Chattalas & Shukla, 2015; Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2009; Smith & Colgate, 2007) but despite the on-going debate, three foundational dimensions of value have emerged namely social, personal and functional value perceptions (Wiedmann, Hennigs, & Siebels, 2007; Shukla & Purani, 2012).

Millennial Consumers

Marketers are moving their sights to millennial consumers as this group has an estimated buying power of between US\$170 billion and US \$200 billion. This significant buying power is expected to obscure that of the Baby Boomers in 2017 (Fromm & Garton, 2013). Apart from their buying power, millennial consumers have also been found to buy luxury goods at a younger age than their predecessors (Tsai, 2005). In light of their significance, a study of the luxury consumption behavior of this generation cohort is pertinent, as these consumers who have been socialized in a materialistic society (Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003), do not necessarily share the consumption behavior of previous cohorts (Gurau, 2012).

The purpose of this research is to elucidate the antecedents to the luxury purchase intentions of millennial consumers in South Africa. The study will set out to contribute to the existing theoretical understanding of luxury consumption by focusing on an under-researched, but highly influential, age cohort, Generation Y (Giovannini et al., 2015) and testing theory in the emerging South African market.

LITERATURE

Nueno and Quelch (1998) defined luxury brands as “those whose ratio of functional utility to price is low while the ratio of intangible and situational utility to price is high” (Nueno & Quelch, 1998, pg. 62). This definition is in alignment with the conspicuous consumption, and hedonic dimensions put forth by Vigneron and Johnson (2004) and will, therefore, be used in defining the concept of luxury for the purpose of this study.

The democratization of luxury, which has enabled millennial consumers to enter into the luxury market, can be illustrated by the example put forward by Giovannini et al. (2015) of Tiffany & Co., Louis Vuitton, and Coach, who all added lower priced items to their merchandise mix, such as a silver jewelry range, sunglasses, perfume and small leather goods. Giovannini et al. (2015) suggested that this pricing strategy could provide a gateway to brand loyalty as entry-level (millennial) luxury consumers may be potential brand advocates Botha (2015).

Value systems as drivers of purchase decisions

The influence that value systems have on consumers' purchase decisions is well recognized in the literature (Nwankwo et al., 2014). Despite luxury scholars not yet being in agreement as to what value drivers luxury is based upon (Chattalas & Shukla, 2015; Wiedmann et al., 2009), three central fundamental dimensions have been identified, namely social, personal, and functional value perceptions (Shukla & Purani, 2012; Wiedmann et al. 2007).

Shukla's (2012) research draws upon the theory of impression management, which posits that an internal motivation to create a favorable social image has a significant effect on a consumer's purchasing behavior (Goffmann, 1959; Tsai, 2005). Shukla (2012) posited that there are two fundamental dimensions to this theory, namely instrumental self-presentation, and expressive self-presentation: The instrumental dimension entails consumption that is aimed at influencing others and attaining rewards, while the expressive dimension involves creating an image that is reflective of one's own personality. Shukla (2012, pg. 575) referred to the aforementioned aspects as “social and personal value perceptions,” respectively.

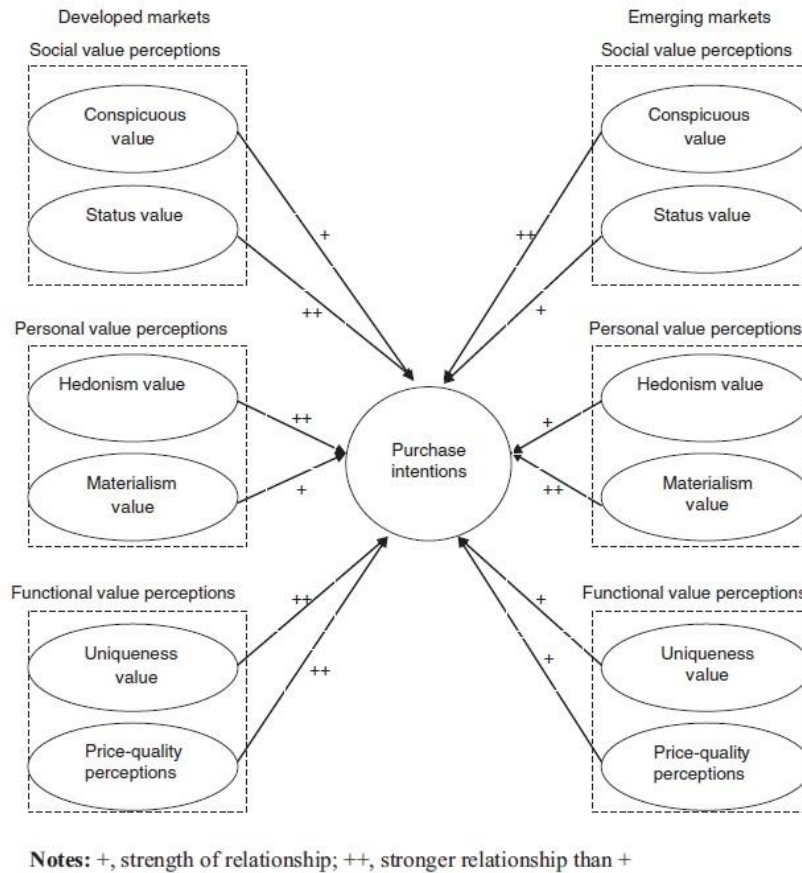


Fig. 1: Shukla's (2012) conceptual value perceptions model

Shukla (2012) postulated that the influence of social, personal, and functional value perceptions on consumers' luxury purchase intentions should be measured simultaneously. Such exploration of the simultaneous influence of multiple constructs can be justified by congruity theory, which posits that consumers seldom make purchase decisions in respect of high-involvement products, such as luxury goods, in isolation, but rather consider multiple factors (Chattalas & Shukla, 2015; Shukla, 2012).

Social value perceptions

Loroz and Helgeson (2013) referred to social values, as they relate to luxury brands, as the desire to own such brands for the purpose of asserting professional standing or displaying social status or to differentiate from others. The pressure to adhere to social norms, including the need to gain social prestige from possessions, is a significant driver of luxury purchase behavior (Shukla, 2011).

Social value perceptions comprise two sub-dimensions, namely conspicuous value and status value (Shukla, 2012). According to Vigneron and Johnson (2004), conspicuousness and status are two of the most essential elements of brand luxury. Conspicuous value refers to the purchase of luxury goods as a means to evidently display status and prestige (Giovannini et al., 2015; Seo & Buchanan-Oliver, 2015), while status value refers to the "personal nature" of owning luxury goods, which are not necessarily displayed publicly (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004, pg. 27).

Personal value perceptions

Tsai (2005) described personal value perceptions as the factors that drive the consumption of luxury goods for the purpose of satisfying the self (as opposed to pleasing others' expectations) and to gain symbolic benefits and a self-directed hedonic experience. Shukla (2012) further incorporated hedonism and materialism, as posted by Vigneron & Johnson (2004), as the two sub-dimensions of personal value perceptions. Hedonism refers to the internal facet of the self, while materialism refers to the external facet of the self (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

Functional value perceptions

Functional value refers to the ability of a product "to perform its functional, utilitarian, or physical purpose" (Smith & Colgate, 2007, pg. 8), which indicates that even luxury goods are expected to be usable yet unique enough to be differentiating. The two sub-dimensions of functional value perceptions, as described by Tynan, McKechnie, and Chhuon (2010), are uniqueness and price-quality.

Millennials and the extension of the luxury value perceptions model

Following the foregoing review of Shukla's (2012) conceptual value perceptions model, this study posits that Shukla's (2012) model be extended in terms of millennial consumers by incorporating the constructs of self-congruity, brand consciousness, and social media marketing, as discussed below.

Botha (2015), argued based on the study of Hyllegard, Yan, Ogle, and Attmann (2010) that what differentiates millennials from previous generations is the differences in their value system. Botha (2015) further posits that in despite this difference in value perceptions, a further three factors have been identified that impact the luxury purchase decision of millennials.

Botha (2015; pg.4), indicates that "firstly, Roy & Rabbanee (2015) asserted that self-congruency (the match between a consumer's self-concept and the user image of a brand) is positively correlated to consumption behaviour and has been found to have a significant influence on the luxury purchase decision of millennials in the US (Giovannini et al., 2015)". The self-congruity theory posits that consumer behavior is partially determined by the similarity between the consumer's self-concept and the product-user image (Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy, 1986). Therefore, aligning the product-user image with a consumer's self-concept offers a "self-congruity route to persuasion," which is positively correlated with product and brand attitudes (Johar & Sirgy, 1991; pg. 26).

Secondly, Chu, Kamal and Kim (2013) called for the construct of brand consciousness to be examined due to its likely effect on luxury purchase decisions. Chu and Kamal (2011) asserted that brand consciousness, which refers to the extent to which a consumer is prone to purchasing well-known brands (Sproles & Kendall, 1986), is an individual personality trait that is likely to influence purchase intentions and product evaluation. Botha (2015) further indicates that "Millennial consumers are more brand conscious than previous generational cohorts, which could largely be attributed to their consciousness of public self-image and self-esteem and the fact that they have more disposable funds than any other group of young consumers recorded in history (Giovannini et al., 2015; Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009). In fact, notwithstanding their age and lower earnings, millennial are disposed to invest in higher quality luxury goods product (Grotts & Johnson, 2013)".

Finally, social media has formed the core of the culture in which millennials have grown up and communicate (Leung, 2013). Botha (2015) highlights the work of Hunt, Atkin, and Krishnan (2012) in arguing that, "these consumers make significant use of Social Media to build and communicate their personal identities and as a means of impression management. As a result, luxury retailers are increasingly using social media to connect with technologically entrenched millennials (2015; pg. 5). Chu and Kamal (2011) found that usage of social media was a significant antecedent to US consumers' brand consciousness

and purchase intention toward luxury goods, whereas brand consciousness was found to impact consumer attitudes toward social media marketing and consumers' subsequent luxury purchase intentions (Chu et al., 2013).

Based on Shukla's model of value perceptions and the discussion of millennial consumers above, this study hypothesizes that¹:

H1: Conspicuous value is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H2: Status value is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H3: Hedonism is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H4: Materialism is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H5: The need for uniqueness is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H6: Price-quality perceptions are positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H7: Self-congruity is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H8: Brand consciousness is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

H9: Social media marketing is positively correlated with the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials.

¹Derived from the unpublished Master's thesis of Botha, N. (2015)

To explicate the hypothesized relationships among the variables, as discussed above, a proposed extended conceptual model is presented in Figure 2 below:

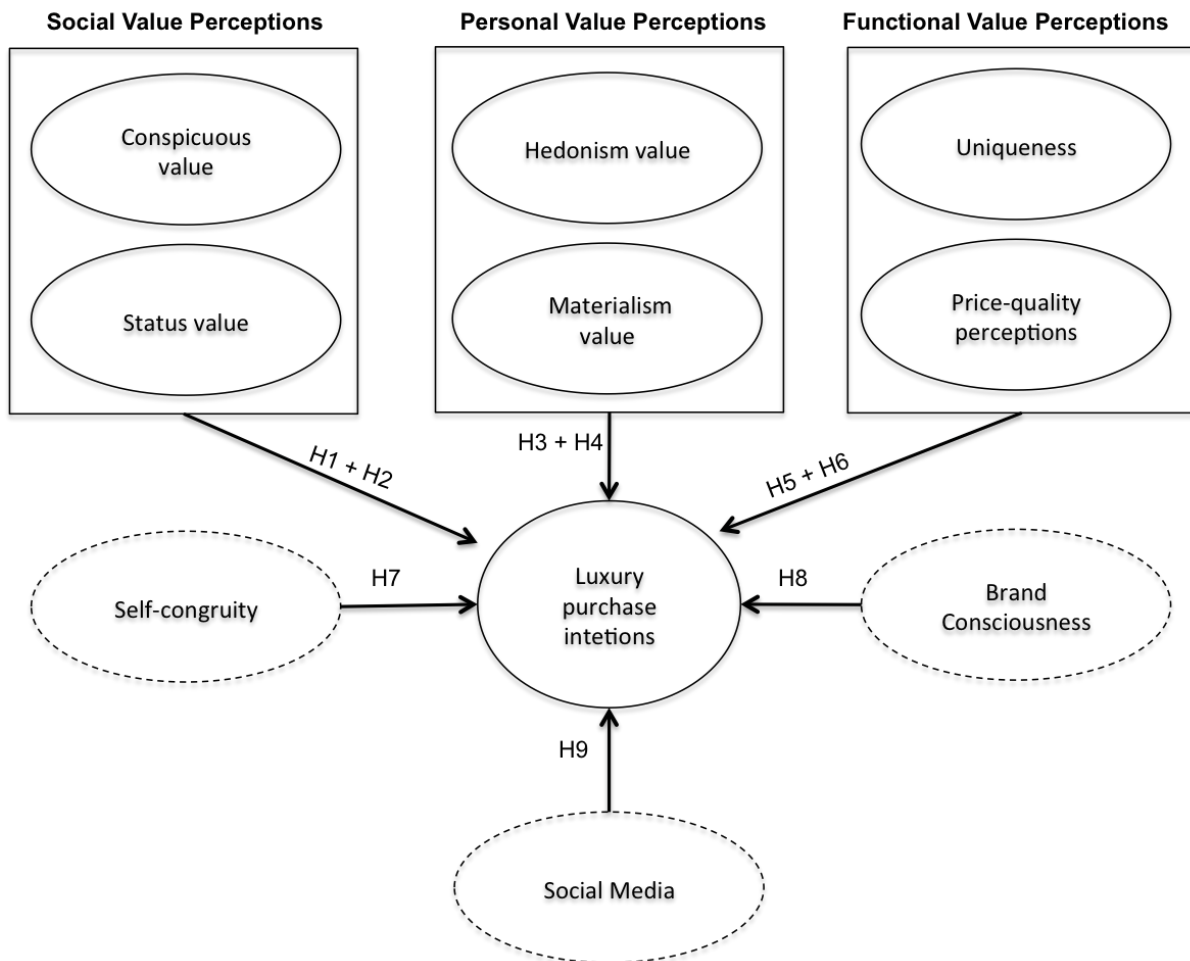


Fig. 2 Extended conceptual model (Botha, N., 2015)

METHODOLOGY

The range of birth dates accorded to millennials, for purposes of this study, was 1977 to 1994 (Duh & Struwig, 2015) i.e. 21 to 38 years of age. This age group accounted for approximately 33.88% of South Africa’s population (Statistics South Africa, 2015), offering lucrative opportunities for marketers due to the magnitude of this market. An income criterion was specified in order to ensure that the population was financially able to purchase the luxury fashion goods indicated in the questionnaire.

For this quantitative study, a non-probability multi-stage snowball sampling technique was used (Neuman, 2011) where the respondents were enlisted through a news posting on Facebook. A total of 489 responses to the survey were received. After the necessary filtering was conducted, a total useable sample of 338 was established which was deemed suitable for subsequent analysis.

A structured, self-completed questionnaire was created posing 30 closed-ended questions, to be answered using a five-point Likert scale. The scale items for measuring the correlation of each of the nine constructs to luxury purchase intention were all adapted from established measurement scales for the current research context.

In order to provide the respondents with an equal sense of what was meant by luxury goods, a definition of this concept was included in the questionnaire for purposes of this study. The definition limited the scope of the luxury goods categories to be considered by respondents when they evaluated the statements contained in the questionnaire by including only the more affordable luxury goods category, namely fashion brands (as displayed on a variety of clothing, handbags, small leather goods, watches, shoes, sunglasses, and perfumes for both genders).

RESULTS²

Confirmatory factor analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was computed in order to evaluate the proposed model for goodness-of-fit. The chi-square test (χ^2 *p*-value) is the conventional overall test of goodness-of-fit in covariance structure analysis. Due to the total sample size being $n = 338$, it was prudent to make use of alternative measures of fit, or fit indices, in addition to the Chi-square/degree of freedom ratio, for purposes of interpreting model fit. RMSEA and CFI were the fit indices employed for purposes of this study. The model fit indices in respect of the proposed model are set out in Table 1 below.

Model	Fit Indices			
	χ^2/df	χ^2 <i>p</i> -value	RMSEA	CFI
CFA Model	2.015	< .001*	.06	.93
Proposed structural model	2.427	< .001*	.07	.90
Shukla's (2012) structural model	2.131	< .001*	.06	.94

Note: **p* = not within cut-off value criterion

Table 1: Model fit indices

As illustrated in Table 1, save for the χ^2 *p*-value, the fit values of each of the fit indices met the requirements for the recommended cut-off criteria set out in Table 2 ($\chi^2/df = 2.427$; RMSEA = 0.07; CFI = 0.90). The χ^2 *p*-value was below the recommended cut-off criterion; however, as stated above, this parameter is particularly susceptible to large sample sizes. Based on the remaining indices, the proposed model evidenced a good fit with all variables appearing to be appropriate conjunctive predictors of South African Millennial consumers' luxury purchase intentions

Fit Index	Goodness-of-fit indices	Recommended cut-off value	Reference
χ^2 <i>p</i> -value	Model Chi-square	> 0.05	Hu and Bentler (1999); Jöreskog (1969)
χ^2/df	Chi-square/degree of freedom ratio	< 5	Wheaton, Muthén, Alwin, and Summers (1977); Tabachnick & Fidell (2007)
RMSEA	Root mean square error of approximation	< 0.07	Steiger (2007)
CFI	Comparative fit index	≥ 0.90	Hoe (2008)

²The results are derived directly from the unpublished thesis of Botha, N. (2015).

Table 2: Fit indices cut-off criteria

The resultant standardized regression weights of the factor loadings in the CFA, all of which are above the recommended value of 0.50 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010), save for the scale item “Owning luxury goods attracts attention”, which rendered a factor loading of 0.24, are set out in Table 3 below.

Scale items	Standardized regression weights
Social value perceptions	
<i>Conspicuous Value</i>	
Owning luxury goods indicates a symbol of achievement	0.87
Owning luxury goods indicates a symbol of wealth	0.75
Owning luxury goods indicates a symbol of prestige	0.80
Owning luxury goods attracts attention	0.24
<i>Status Value</i>	
I buy luxury goods just because it has status	0.78
Luxury goods are important to me because they make me feel that I am acceptable in my work circle	0.78
I purchase luxury goods to gain/increase social status	0.82
Personal value perceptions	
<i>Hedonism</i>	
While shopping for luxury goods, I feel the excitement of the hunt	0.71
When shopping for luxury goods, I am able to forget my problems	0.87
When in a bad mood, shopping for luxury goods enhances my mood	0.83
<i>Materialism</i>	
Purchasing luxury goods increases my happiness	0.82
It is important to me to own really nice luxury goods	0.80
It sometimes bothers me quite a bit that I can't afford to buy all the luxury goods I want	0.52
Functional value perceptions	
<i>Uniqueness</i>	
I often buy luxury goods in such a way that I create a personal image that cannot be duplicated	0.83
I like to own new luxury goods before others do	0.81
When a luxury product becomes popular among others, I avoid buying or using it	0.57
<i>Price Quality Perceptions</i>	
I believe luxury goods are of superior quality	0.77
In my mind, the higher price charged by luxury goods indicate higher quality	0.75
You always have to pay a bit more for the best	0.76
Self-Congruity	
Luxury fashion items are consistent with how I see myself	0.81
Luxury fashion items reflect who I am	0.86
The image of the typical luxury fashion customer is highly consistent with how I see myself	0.84
Luxury fashion items are the mirror image of me	0.85
People similar to me consume luxury fashion items	0.54
Brand Consciousness	
I pay attention to the brand names of the products I buy	0.78
Sometimes I am willing to pay more money for a product because of its brand name	0.74
I believe the brands I buy are a reflection of who I am	0.74

Social Media Marketing	
I am interested in utilizing social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) for shopping luxury brands shopping online	0.72
If I purchase products from a luxury retailer's offline store, I will visit its social media page (such as Facebook and Twitter) before making an offline purchase	0.80
I am interested in utilizing social media (such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) to refer to customer reviews	0.81

Table 3: Factor loadings

Reliability

Cronbach's alpha and the composite reliability (CR) coefficient were computed for each of the items constituting the latent variables as well as for the full scale of constructs proposed to measure luxury purchase intentions. The internal consistency and CR estimates are detailed in Table 4.

Variable	Number of items	α	CR
Conspicuous value	4	0.77	0.78
Status value	3	0.83	0.84
Hedonism	3	0.84	0.85
Materialism	3	0.75	0.76
Uniqueness	3	0.78	0.78
Price-quality perceptions	3	0.80	0.81
Self-congruity	5	0.87	0.89
Brand consciousness	3	0.80	0.80
Social media marketing	3	0.82	0.82

Table 4: Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values for all variables

As illustrated in Table 4, each of the scales yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability value, respectively, of above the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010).

Validity

Convergent validity (AVE) values were computed for each of the items constituting the identified variables as well as for the full scale of constructs proposed to measure luxury purchase intentions, the results of which are detailed in Table 5. As illustrated in Table 5, each of the scales yielded an AVE value of above the recommended value of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Variable	AVE value
Conspicuous value	0.50
Status value	0.63
Hedonism	0.65
Materialism	0.53
Uniqueness	0.55
Price-quality perceptions	0.58
Self-congruity	0.62
Brand consciousness	0.57
Social media marketing	0.61

Table 5: AVE values for all variables used

Hypothesis testing

Based on the aforementioned results, the proposed model was considered to be sufficiently valid and consequently allowed for statistical interpretation. Further support for the concurrent validity of the subscales was obtained from the Pearson correlations that were computed (see Table 6 below). That is, each of the variables that were considered conceptually demonstrated statistically significant correlations with one another.

Variable	SV	H	M	U	PQP	SC	BC	SMM	PI
CV	0.48**	0.45**	0.52**	0.37**	0.42**	0.57**	0.49**	0.20**	0.72**
SV	-	0.42**	0.59**	0.43**	0.27**	0.53**	0.47**	0.31**	0.71**
H	-	-	0.65**	0.48**	0.28**	0.46**	0.35**	0.31**	0.70**
M	-	-	-	0.55**	0.39**	0.64**	0.53**	0.33**	0.83**
U	-	-	-	-	0.25**	0.49**	0.46**	0.33**	0.69**
PQP	-	-	-	-	-	0.42**	0.48**	0.13*	0.56**
SC	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.65**	0.29**	0.82**
BC	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.25**	0.74**
SMM	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.50**

Table 6: Pearson correlations matrix (r)

Figure 3 (below) summarizes the findings of the structural model indicating the strength of the relationships of the hypothesized constructs with purchase intention (PI), as well as the extent to which these relationships were significant. Based on these findings, all the hypotheses were accepted, and each construct can be regarded as an antecedent to South African Millennial consumers' luxury purchase intentions. However, it should be noted that the correlation between PI and social media marketing (SMM) (H₉) was the weakest compared to the correlation between PI and all the other variables, suggesting that SMM is comparatively the least pertinent antecedent to luxury purchase intentions.

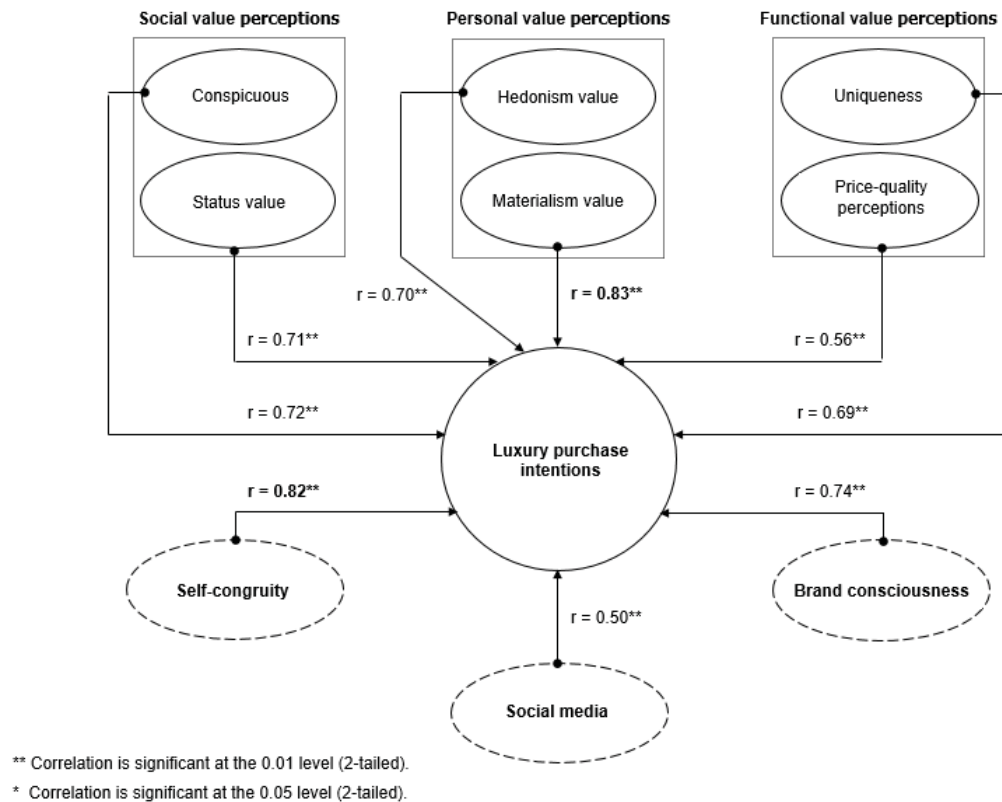


Figure 3: Variables with indication of strength of correlation to PI

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

H1 tested the relationship between conspicuous value (CV) and the luxury purchase intentions (PI) of South African Millennials. Support for H1 could be explained by two factors. Firstly, Millennials display high levels of brand consciousness and public self-consciousness, due to the fact that their self-identities are not yet fully developed (Eastman & Liu, 2012; Gurau, 2012). As such, Giovannini et al.'s (2015) findings that the consciousness of public self-image and self-esteem of Millennial consumers in the US are drivers of high levels of conspicuous consumption motivations, are supported by the results of this research. Secondly, these findings support Duh and Struwig's (2015) statement that South African Millennials prioritize the purchase of status and conspicuous products due to the fast-changing social, technological, and economic landscape in South Africa, which contributes to the pressure experienced by this generation to be accepted

in higher circles. Luxury brands could leverage the conspicuous consumption motives of Millennial consumers by providing products with distinct visible logos. Through the use of these products, Millennials could communicate the status and exclusivity represented by these luxury brands through the conspicuous use of their purchases.

H2 tested the relationship between status value (SV) and luxury purchase intentions. With regards to SV, Shukla's (2012) study showed that, while this construct was a significant predictor of PI in both the eastern emerging as well as the western developed markets, the strength of the relationship between PI and SV was stronger in the latter markets. Support of H2 in this study would lead us to infer that South African Millennial consumers share the preference of consumers in eastern emerging as well as western developed markets for status value and their desire to gain prestige by acquiring products that are status-laden. Marketing managers would, therefore, need to ensure that the exclusivity and status associated with their particular brand are clearly communicated in their marketing messages aimed at this segment.

A distinction between the conspicuous value (CV) and status value constructs was made in this study, which coincides with Truong et al.'s (2008) and O'Cass and McEwen's (2004) arguments that these two constructs should not be regarded as a single construct. However, since the correlation between PI and each of the constructs CV ($r = 0.72$) and SV ($r = 0.71$) was similar and large in effect size, it would appear that the aforementioned distinction between these two constructs did not yield different results in this case. It could, therefore, be inferred that, among South African Millennials, there is a direct correlation between status and conspicuousness. Considering the importance of status value as a predictor of luxury purchase among South African Millennials marketers would do well to communicate a lifestyle which is desired by millennial consumers by positioning their luxury brands as status symbols. It would be as important for non-users of this brand to have an awareness of the status attributed to the brand as this would enhance the ability of the buyers to signal their status through the conspicuous use of their luxury purchases.

The relationship between hedonism and luxury purchase intentions was tested by H3. Support for H3 in this study suggests that the multi-sensory aspects of product use for the purposes of emotional fulfillment (in other words, hedonic consumption, as defined by Holbrook and Hirschman (1982)), is an antecedent to the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials. Marketing managers are therefore encouraged to pay particular attention to the sensory elements created in their retail stores, as this is likely to increase purchase intentions. Marketers could consider enhancing the sensory and emotional experience by offering a fragrant beverage such as good quality coffee or even champagne to their customers-in-store. Stimulating positive emotions such as making customers feel important and valued could be achieved through excellent customer service and attention from knowledgeable staff in-store.

H4 tested the relationship between materialism and luxury purchase intentions. This hypothesis was supported and was found to be the strongest predictor of PI among all the measured constructs. This finding corresponds with the conclusions drawn from previous research that Millennials display high levels of materialism (Giovannini et al., 2015; Loro & Helgeson, 2013), which, in turn, can significantly influence consumers' attitudes toward purchasing global luxury goods (Zhang & Kim, 2013). Managers of luxury brands, therefore, could strategically communicate this particular luxury value dimension in their marketing campaigns developed for this market in order to more optimally position and differentiate their product from competitors.

The relationship between uniqueness and luxury purchase intentions was strong and positive as indicated by the acceptance of H5. This finding supports the view of Tulgan (2009) in that millennials feel little need to conform, and, in fact, embrace the power of diversity. As they regard uniqueness as central to their identity, they pursue originality and the customization of the self (Tulgan, 2009) and are motivated by a need to avoid similarity with others in an effort to achieve social distinctiveness (Roy & Rabbanee, 2015). As above, marketing managers could leverage this by ensuring that their products are significantly

differentiated from those of competitors in order for millennial consumers to be able to indicate their uniqueness based on their purchase and use of a specific luxury brand.

Support for H6 (the relationship between price-quality perceptions and luxury purchase intentions) indicate that South African Millennial consumers are, as Han et al. (2010) suggest, willing to pay a premium price for luxury brands. As such, brands symbolize their social distinctiveness, which, in turn, aligns with consumers' need for uniqueness. Marketing managers need to keep in mind that charging a premium price will not necessarily deter Millennial consumers from purchasing a luxury brand, but rather encourage them due to the distinction as they will be able to communicate their own uniqueness and social distinctiveness as a result of the premium price of the item.

The relationship between self-congruity (the first of three constructs with which Shukla's (2012) model was extended) and luxury purchase intentions was tested by H7. Support for H7 suggests that these consumers are inclined to purchase brands with images that are consistent with their self-concept, as suggested by Liu, Mizerski and Soh (2012) and Yu, Lin and Chen (2013). SC was, in fact, found to be the second strongest predictor of PI among all the constructs (with materialism ($r = 0.83$) being the strongest). Managers of luxury brands could, therefore, develop a congruence model specifically targeted at this market. This could be achieved by emphasizing a specific product image attribute valued by the target consumer in marketing campaigns (for example, by using celebrity endorsements with distinct personalities with which the target consumer can identify), thereby ensuring the highest level of congruity.

H8 tested the relationship between brand consciousness and luxury purchase intentions and was supported. Noble et al. (2009) and Giovannini et al. (2015), put forth that Millennial consumers show higher levels of brand consciousness than previous generations, which could largely be attributed to their consciousness of public self-image and self-esteem and the fact that they have more disposable funds than any other group of young consumers recorded in history (Giovannini et al., 2015; Noble et al., 2009). This is especially the case for South African Millennials who constitute the majority of the growing middle class, colloquially referred to as "Black Diamonds" or the "Mzansi Youth" (Duh & Struwig, 2015). These consumers make use of brands to signal their new wealth and status. Marketing managers could add value to these consumers by ensuring that their luxury brands are perceived by the wider market as status-laden as this will assist these consumers in communicating their self- concept through the use of these brands.

The final hypothesis (H9) tested the relationship between social media marketing of luxury retailers and the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials. Support for H9 mirrors results observed in studies conducted among luxury brand consumers in Seoul (Kim & Ko, 2010) and the US (Chu et al., 2013). This finding suggests that high levels of materialism in South African Millennials, as confirmed by the support of H4 ($r = 0.83$), could, in part, be a result of these consumers' frequent exposure to consumption-related messages through the use of social media. In light of this finding, managers of luxury brands should increase their online presence and social media marketing in order to more effectively connect with these influential consumers. By increasing online presence brands would be able to provide value to consumers by not only furnishing them with a portal to communicate with peers with whom they consult regarding their purchase decisions but also encourage brand awareness, which, in turn, develops brand loyalty and resultant repeated purchases (Palumbo & Herbig, 2000). Marketers of luxury brands are therefore encouraged to create engaging online brand experiences and closely couple their online and offline marketing efforts.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although this study offers valuable insights into the factors that influence the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials, it does present a number of limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

The first limitation lies in the use of a nonprobability sampling technique, namely snowball sampling, which limits the generalizability of the findings. Snowball sampling may also introduce selection bias into the sample.

This research was conducted among South African Millennials, the existence of sub-cultures within the population, and the fact that they may differ from each other in their approaches to decision-making and luxury purchase intentions were not taken into account for purpose of this study. A study of the potentially differential influence of the constructs discussed herein on the luxury purchase intentions of the various sub-cultures within the millennial population could yield interesting results. Furthermore, the findings are limited to the South African context and are not representative of other emerging markets given strong cultural differences.

The scope of this study was limited to four broad categories of luxury goods, namely designer apparel (ready-to-wear), handbags and accessories, fine jewelry and watches, and cosmetics and fragrances. Despite the sample sizes for each category not being large enough for sufficient comparative analysis, there did not appear to be a significant difference in the results between the different product categories. This may be due to the categories all being in the affordability range for the sample. This may not be the case when comparing these categories to more expensive and possibly aspirational product categories for this sample. Future studies could broaden this scope to the luxury categories of automobiles, travel and leisure services, boating and yachts, fine art and collectibles, and fine wines and spirits. However, in doing so, consideration should be given to the probability and affordability of these goods for the target sample used in such a study.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to developing a deeper understanding of the antecedents to the luxury purchase intentions of South African Millennials as well as to the theoretical debate as to the extent to which key constructs may be generalized across cultures. This research makes a further important theoretical contribution in that it offers an extension of Shukla's (2012) value perceptions model by incorporating the constructs of self-congruity, brand consciousness, and social media marketing, and thereby deepening the understanding of the antecedents to luxury purchase intentions by presenting a validated cohesive model.

The findings offer luxury brand managers key insights and guidance on adapting brand positioning and differentiation strategies in emerging markets, instead of focusing their attention on surface-based demographic variables only. Due to the fact that the findings suggest that the predictors of luxury consumption of South African Millennial consumers and consumers in western developed markets are mostly homogenous, international luxury brands looking to expand their South African footprint could, to a large extent, standardize their marketing campaigns for these markets and thereby take advantage of economies of scope.

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