

WAS LUXURY LITTLE RESEARCHED? AN EXPLORATION OF STUDIES AND RESEARCH TRENDS IN THE AREA OF MARKETING OF LUXURY GOODS, BEFORE 2005

Teach. assist. Raluca CIORNEA

Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: raluca.ciornea@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Professor PhD. Marius D. POP

Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: marius.pop@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Lecturer PhD. Mihai F. BACILA

Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: mihai.bacila@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Teach. assist PhD. Alexandra M. DRULE (TIRCA)

Babes-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, Romania

Email: alexandra.tirca@econ.ubbcluj.ro

Abstract:

The first questions that all scientists address when approaching a new domain are related to how well studied is the field, who and what has studied. The answers help them establish their personal areas of interest and contribution. Thus in order to help the authors concerned with the luxury domain we decided to conduct a secondary marketing research and the main purpose was to identify the studies and the trends in research in the area of marketing of luxury goods and their degree of approach, before 2005. The present study is only a part of a complex research that approaches the entire evolution in luxury research field, but due to space limitation papers were separated in two: the evolution before 2005 and the evolution after 2005. Unique by its theme, this paper is intended to be ambitious by analysing all the luxury materials to which had access the authors. The results confirmed the previous statement of some authors that luxury was little researched comparing to other domains.

Keywords: *luxury domain, marketing of luxury goods, luxury studies, luxury research, research trends in luxury domain.*

Introduction

Characterised by a dynamic and even spectacular growth, from \$ 20 billion(USD) in 1985 (The Economist, 2002 cited in Husic and Cicic, 2009), to \$ 80 billion(USD) in 1990 (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999;), \$174 billion (USD) in 2010 and estimated value of \$ 207 billion (USD) by 2015 (Euromonitor International, 2010), the market of luxury goods should be an attractive domain not only for producers and

investors, but also for scientist. However ambiguity was and still is one of the words that describe the luxury field (Dubois et al., 2001), as there hasn't been reached to a consensus in defining the main concepts in the domain (Godey et al., 2009) - seen by some as a consequence of low scientific interest.

In addition, luxury sector has undergone major changes over time and different authors state that some

changes will have significant consequences for its future:

- luxury consumers have changed, as they are not represented only by the elite; the demand of luxury is significantly higher; the profile of the consumers, the consumption behavior and the motivations for consumption have suffered important modifications (eg. All  r  s, 1997; Silverstein and Fiske, 2003; Twichell, 2002);

- luxury goods have changed, as new categories of luxury more affordable have emerged, the number of products and brands has increased, the characteristics of the goods have changed (eg. All  r  s, 1997; Silverstein and Fiske, 2003; Vickers and Renand, 2003);

- luxury producers have changed, as most of the initial family businesses transformed into large conglomerates and this transformation implied modifications in the marketing strategies adopted ;

- the economic context has changed having impact on the luxury industry too (eg. Unity Marketing report, 2004-2011; Luxury Institute report, 2004-2011).

Thus, the luxury domain was characterized by great opportunities for scientists. Nonetheless, authors state that luxury and marketing of luxury products were little studied and some areas were not addressed at all (Dubois and Laurent, 1994; Vickers and Renand, 2003; Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999).

The existence before 2005, of papers (even books) on various topics related to luxury, of special issues in journals of marketing dedicated to luxury (*Revue Fran  aise du Marketing*, 1991), of MBA programs or PhD. thesis in luxury ('International Luxury Brand Management'- ESSEC Business School; 'Monographie d'une histoire de luxe'- Simon, 1972) and conferences on luxury (IHT-'Luxury 2004: The lure of Asia'; 'Luxury Wine Trends Annual Conference', 2004) led us to wonder

how well studied was in fact the luxury sector and what 'little researched/studied' means.

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the existing literature on luxury and marketing of luxury goods in order to establish the degree of research, the areas approached and the trends in studies in the field before 2005. The authors of this paper consider year 2005 a threshold in the given context, due to significant differences on the intensity of research in the before and after periods- of the total number of scientific materials on luxury identified by the authors about 66% were published during 2005-2011. Also, this is the periods when most of the research companies begun to study the luxury market.

The objectives of this secondary marketing research can be summarized as follows:

- stimulate further research in marketing of luxury goods by underling evolution or popularity of topics, the type of research that are based on and the year of the study;

- contribute to the emerging literature on luxury, as being the only study of its kind, offering a clear image of the past of the areas of interest in the marketing of luxury goods.

In the following, we have proposed to resume the most important findings of our research, separating them on the main trends in studies and annexing tables with the materials (authors, year) that approached the identified topics.

Studies and research trends

Specific to every domain, is the essential preoccupation of the scientists with defining the main concepts. The attempts to delineate luxury are quite old (eg. Appadurai, 1986) various but not consensual accepted. This is a period characterized mostly by simple and even confusing definitions that use vague terms like "dream" (Dubois and Paternault, 1995), but at its end more complex approaches emerge that take

into account the dimensions of the luxury.

Many papers do not differentiate between defining luxury and defining luxury brands or luxury products, which increased the confusion in the field. Have been proposed new concepts to describe the changes in the luxury market, such as 'new luxury', 'traditional luxury', 'inaccessible luxury',

'intermediate luxury', 'accessible luxury', etc (eg. Allérès, 1991; Silverstein and Fiske, 2003;). There is the first attempt to describe the term "new luxury", often used to explain the contemporary market of luxury products. As luxury world is controversial, some scientists have conducted primary researches in order to establish consumers' attitude towards the luxury concept.

Table 1
Materials aimed at defining and conceptualizing luxury, luxury products and luxury brands

	<i>Secondary research</i>	<i>Primary research</i>
<i>Luxury and new luxury</i>	Appadurai (1986) Allérès (1991, 1997) Benarrosh-Dahan (1991) Berry (1994) Roux and Floch (1996) Frank R.H. (1999) Twitchell (2002) Roux (2002) Mortara (2003)	Dubois and Paternault (1997) Dubois et al. (2001) Dubois and Czellar (2002) Dubois (2003) Vigneron and Johnson (2004)
<i>Attitudes towards the luxury concept</i>	Skrinnikov(1997)	Dubois and Laurent (1994, 1996) Tidwell and Dubois (1996) Laurent and Dubois(1996) Dubois and Paternault (1997) Wong and Ahuvia (1998) Dubois et al. (2001)
<i>Luxury products</i>	Allérès (1991, 1997) Renand (1993)	Vickers and Renand (2003)
<i>Luxury brands</i>	Roux (1994) Nueno and Quelch (1998) Vigneron and Johnson (1999) Wetlaufer(2001) Kent et al. (2000) Phau and Prendergast (2000) Allérès (2003) Beverland (2004)	Dubois and Paternault (1995) Roux (1995) Lallement(1999) Vigneron and Johnson (2004)

While certain authors have limited to monitor the evolution of the luxury concept, others have approached more concrete issues aiming to differentiate the luxury products/brands by the premium or even lower ones, to measure luxury brands positioning in people's minds, to establish the characteristics of a luxury brand or product.

There are few papers that proposed classifications of luxury, luxury brands, luxury products and there are significant differences

between them. We consider that behind the differences may be the fact that there hasn't been reached to a consensus regarding the definition of the luxury products and the luxury brands. Over time some classifications (eg. Allérès, 1991) have been embraced by many authors.

Table 1 presents the papers (authors, year) that addressed the definition and conceptualization of luxury, luxury products and luxury brands. The resources were separated according to the type of research conducted by the authors— secondary or primary research -

in order to see to what extent certain concepts have been verified in practice.

It is said that the origins of luxury go "back to the dawn of humanity" (Kapferer and Bastien, 2009, p. 6). Thus, authors have chosen to study the long and really fascinating history of luxury, exposing the consumption laws and restrictions of use to certain individuals and situations, the changes in attitudes toward luxury, the democratization of luxury and the massification of luxury which implies the reduction of the barriers of consumption. While some authors limited their area of interest to the history of luxury in specific countries as Russia, more ambitious ones have opted for a holistic approach, cross-bordered. On the other hand, we have identified papers that study the history of luxury from the beginning till present and papers that discuss only particular time periods (eg. eighteen century) or stages of the evolution of luxury.

Studies show that the earliest luxury perceptions were predominantly negative, as in Latin thoughts, classical Greek thoughts and later in Christian ethics, luxury was considered a threat to the society by associating it with futility, overcoming of natural life, vice and sin (Berry, 1994). Some authors were concerned to understand these issues of morality and to identify the period and the context which made possible the 'demoralization of luxury'- the transition from a luxury with negative connotations to one with positive connotations (Berry, 1994). Considering the aspects of morality that prevailed in the beginning, one of the most debated issues was at some point, the relationship between luxury and necessity, futility and human needs. The topic was disputed between authors that saw luxury as a conspicuous waste and thus opposed

to necessity, and authors that searched to defend it by associating luxury with the dream world where everything is beyond the basic needs.

Although the history of luxury allows the understanding of the past evolution of luxury consumption, the producers and the practitioners in the field of luxury were particularly concerned about the present and future of the sector. Implicitly, several studies are focused on current(at the time) evolutions of the luxury market in general or in particular for certain categories of luxury goods (eg. wine, accessories, clothing, jewelry, cars, restaurants, hotels), luxury brands (eg. Gucci, Louis Vuitton, Prada) or luxury producers (eg. Gucci Group N.V., LVMH Group). Some studies are conducted by research companies-we have also cases of specialized ones exclusively on the luxury sector- but limited especially to national evolutions for SUA. Luxury in France is the other researched market in luxury papers.

In general, the research reports provide information about financial trends and forecasts on the luxury market underlining the emerging opportunities, describe the evolutions in luxury consumer preferences (the categories and the amount of products and brands that were purchased, the amount of money allocated for consumption of luxury, the luxury purchases on the Internet, etc.), present the number and brief profiles of luxury consumers.

Similar to other domains, most of the studies are focused on the consumer of goods. In 1995, Dubois and Laurent claimed that the luxury market is not researched regularly, existing only few panels of consumers. The existence of very few research companies interested in the luxury market confirms the statement.

Table 2 shows that the papers which discuss the history of luxury, the relationship to morality or necessity are mainly desk researches, while as expected those who approach the market evolution are also primary researches.

Table 2

Materials which address the relationship between luxury, necessity, art and fashion, the luxury history and the luxury market evolution

	<i>Secondary research</i>	<i>Primary research</i>
<i>History of luxury, aspects of morality</i>	Mandeville (1924) Galbraith (1958) Sombart (1992) Berry (1994) Hunt(1995) Richou and Lombard (1999) Brioschi (2000) Pilyaev (2000) Berg and Eger (2003) Castarède (2003) Lipovetsky and Roux (2003)	
<i>Luxury-necessity</i>	Veblen (1899) Appadurai (1986) Besley (1989) Sombart (1992) Kemp (1998)	
<i>Luxury market evolution</i>	Roux and Floch (1996) Gutsatz(1996) Castarède (2003) Nguyen (2004)	Mendelsohn Media Research (1977-2011) Beveland (2004) Unity Marketing (2004-2011) Luxury Institute (2004-2011)

The lack of a consensus regarding what is luxury or a luxury product/brand has consequences on establishing who the luxury consumer is. Thus the approaches are quite different, from authors who let the individuals decide if they consider that have purchased luxury goods to authors (especially research companies) who take into consideration more concrete criteria as household income, the net assets, etc.

While some authors take into account all categories of consumers,

others have oriented their studies only on particular segments of consumers delimited by income, wealth, net assets. More recent preoccupations are focused on differentiating between the consumers in the present from the ones in the past, respectively the consumers of new luxury from the consumers of traditional luxury. Table 3 displays the materials focused on the consumer of luxury goods.

Table 3

Materials focused on the consumer of luxury goods

	<i>Secondary research</i>	<i>Primary research</i>
<i>Consumer categories, characteristics</i>	Allèrès(1991, 1997) Belk (2001) Twitchell (2002) Skrinnikov(1997)	Mendelsohn Media Research (1977-2011) Hirschman (1988) Dubois and Laurent(1993,1995,1996) Laurent and Dubois(1996) Kapferer (1998) Dubois et al. (2001) Morris and White (2003) Unity Marketing (2004-2011) Luxury Institute (2004-2011)
<i>New consumer of luxury</i>	Ziccardi (2001)	LaBarbera (1988) Silverstein and Fiske (2003)

Although we have not identified studies aiming to understand the decision-making process and or its classic five steps accepted by the marketing literature, there is a preponderance of concerns with the understanding of the motivations and determinants behind the acquisition of luxury products and brands.

The most discussed motivations and determinants of luxury consumption, of a personal or interpersonal nature are: the

conspicuous consumption, hedonism, materialism and wealth accumulation, the desire for uniqueness, the self-concept, the influence of the reference groups, the impact of country of origin effect. Other aspects studied, but to a lesser extent concern criteria of satisfaction, quality perceptions, attitudes towards certain luxury brands and products, the positioning of specific brands in consumers' minds. The materials identified to focus on these aspects are mentioned in Table 4.

Table 4

Materials focused on aspects related to luxury consumption

	<i>Secondary research</i>	<i>Primary research</i>
<i>Motivations and determinants of acquisition of luxury</i>	Veblen, (1899) Allèrès (1991, 1997) Vigneron and Johnson (1999) Ait-Sahalia et al. (2004) Phau and Prendergast (2000) Gutsatz(1996)	Leibenstein (1950) Bearden and Etzel (1982) Horiuchi (1984) Fauchois and Krieg (1991) Sukhdial et al. (1995) Dubois and Laurent(1996) Kapferer (1998) Wong and Ahuvia (1998) Vigneron and Johnson (1999) Piron (2000) Morris and White (2003) Prendergast and Wong (2003) Lu (2004)
<i>Attitudes toward luxury products/ brands; Satisfaction/ Positioning</i>	Letzelter et al. (1996)	Dubois and Duquesne(1993a) Kapferer (1998) Bernstein(1999) Wong and Zaichkowsky (1999)

Although some scientists consider that luxury knows no national boundaries (Wiedmann et al., 2007), several researches have shown that luxury is changing over time, from one generation to another and from one culture to another(eg. Berry, 1994; Wong and Ahuvia,1998; Phau and Prendergast, 2000). Most of the studies were conducted on US consumers, but there can be seen a upward trend in the number of studies conducted among consumers from other countries like Japan, Australia, China, France, Russia, Korea, etc.

Furthermore, there are few authors that have chosen to conduct international researches in order to highlight the cultural differences between the consumers of luxury goods (eg. their consumption motivations, attitudes towards luxury).

Since the publication of Veblen(1899) which made known 'the conspicuous consumption', luxury products and services have acquired more functions. But the luxury study has began with the study of conspicuous consumption, considered to be the most mentioned reason for luxury consumption and for a long period of

time even the single reason. This existence nowadays of this form of consumption was also debated. Although in the literature we find both notions of conspicuous consumption and status consumption, most studies do not differentiate between them, reason why few authors have decided to draw some boundaries using primary researches. Connections between the two concepts were found.

The dramatic changes in the luxury market have led inevitably to studies

that address the phenomenon of massification of luxury and the new forms of consumption that accompany it: trading-up and trading-down. Several authors sought to describe the phenomenon and the two forms of consumption, the factors that have contributed to its occurrence, the intensity, extension and the future trends. Materials dealing in a more comprehensive manner the issues mentioned are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Materials that discuss the concepts of conspicuous and status consumption, respectively the phenomenon of massification of luxury and new forms of consumption

	<i>Secondary research</i>	<i>Primary research</i>
<i>Conspicuous consumption, status consumption</i>	Veblen (1899) Mason (1981) Bagwel and Bernheim (1996)	Eastman et al. (1999) Vigneron and Johnson(1999) Piron (2000) O'Cass (2000) O'Cass and McEwen (2004)
<i>Luxury massification Trading-up and trading-down</i>	Allérès (1991, 1997) Nuevo and Quelch (1998) Twitchell (2002) Cornell (2002) Evrard and Roux (2004) Ziccardi (2001)	Silverstein and Fiske (2003)
<i>Studies on other consumers than US luxury consumers</i>	Skrinnikov(1997) Nyeck and Roux (2003) Castarède (2003)	Dubois and Laurent (1993) Tidwell and Dubois (1996) Dubois and Laurent (1996) Laurent and Dubois(1996) Dubois and Paternault (1997) Wong and Ahuvia (1998) Wong and Zaichkowsky (1999) Nishiyama (1998) Dubois et al. (2001) Lu (2004)

Although the luxury domain is perceived by some as frivolous, only with hard work by combining the business practice with creative approaches, can be build strong brands able to transform the company into a legend (Ward and Chiari,2008). Analyzing the strategies in the luxury domain, Dubois(2003) proposed a set of paradoxes regarding the marketing classic actions, extended later by other

authors: the most discussed paradoxes are those of demand, of product, of price, of distribution, of competition, of communication and of brand. Thus, the aspects which made authors believe that marketing of luxury is paradoxical, led to studies of the strategies used by different brands (eg. Burberry, Louis Vuitton) or for various categories of products (eg. fashion, wine, scotch, hotels, cars, luxury properties).

Table 6

Materials focused on strategic aspects in the luxury domain

General strategies	Allèrès (1991, 1997) Bechtold (1991) Joly (1991) Roux (1991) Dubois (1992) Dubois and Duquesne(1993b) Gutsatz(1996) Ziccardi (2001) Catry (2003) Castarède (2003)
Strategies for specific luxury brands/ products	Stanley (1989,1997) Roux and Boush (1996) Min and Min (1996) Marber and Kooros (1997) Bernstein(1999) Beverland (2004) Mandhachitara and Lockshin (2004) Moore and Birtwistle (2004) Nguyen (2004) Olmo-Riley et al. (2004)
Marketing mix components	Allèrès (1991, 1997) Charrueau (1991) Damas (1991) Lamoine –Darthois (1991) Neiertz (1991) Gatard (1991) Dubois and Duquesne (1993a) Dubois and Paternault (1995) Weber and Dubois (1995) Chevalier (1996) Kapferer (1996) Nueno and Quelch (1998) Brioschi (2000) Berg (2002) Castarède (2003)
Luxury - internet	Rolf-Seringhaus (2002) Riley and Lacroix(2003)

While some scientists are considering strategies in general, others prefer a more specific approach focusing on product or brand extension strategies, brand internationalization strategies, positioning strategies, strategies of distribution, pricing and communication. In some of the studies, has been opted for a separation of the marketing strategies on the three segments of luxury identified by Allèrès (1991)-accessible, intermediate and inaccessible. If several authors were concerned with the success of luxury

brand extensions, others have attempted to identify the extensions' possible negative impact on brand value.

Although companies' activity is based on traditional marketing models like 4P or 6P, in case of some categories of luxury goods these are argued to be insufficient. Even though, the interest in the marketing mix is somehow limited, as most of the papers discuss only one of the components of the mix. Related to distribution, the accent is on the channels used by

various luxury brands and on the importance played by distribution when creating experiences.

Regarding the mix component 'product' the interest is especially on the luxury brands, brands' management, differentiation and the maintaining of the label of 'luxury brand'. Only few studies discuss the 'price' and 'promotion' components in general, as authors prefer the case studies on specific luxury brands. There are a couple of papers, even books, in which are proposed sales techniques for certain categories of products that can be used as a basis when training the sales force.

At the end of the period, a new theme began to capture the interest of the researchers: the compatibility of luxury with the Internet. The papers debating these aspects are mentioned in Table 6, but the materials are not separated in two categories as previously, because most of the studies are based on case studies- secondary research.

Often, the act of imitation in consumption appears from the desire to belong to a higher social class(Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Thus, we decided to expose also the papers that address the consumption of counterfeited luxury goods, because on the one hand, some researches show that there are groups of consumers who purchase both original and counterfeit luxury goods (Nia and Zaichkowsky, 2000) and on the other hand, because consumers who buy counterfeited luxuries have the desire to buy(Wilcox et al.2009), but currently don't have the financial resources. Some authors believe that when their financial situation will improve, these consumers will tend to trade-up, therefore representing a potential market for the accessible luxury.

Studies on this area (Table 7) deal with aspects as consumption motivations, establishing consumers' attitudes towards counterfeit luxury products, discussing the effects of counterfeiting on the luxury producers.

Table 7

Materials which address aspects of counterfeiting of luxury

<i>Luxury - counterfeit</i>
Higgins and Rubin (1986) Grossman and Shapiro (1988) Vincent and Monnin (1990) Delener (2000) Nia and Zaichkowsky (2000) D'Astous and Gargouri (2001) Fauveliere (2004)

Conclusion

As can be seen in the presented tables, a significant number of studies in the field of luxury (over one third) were conducted during 2000-2004, thus showing the increasing of the interest for this sector characterized by paradoxes and attractive turnovers. Also, we may conclude that:

- luxury and marketing of luxury goods were little researched comparing to other domains;

- the field is little approached not only in general but also in particular, as there are many areas that have been little or not at all studied;

- few authors and few research companies were interested in luxury sector and luxury marketing;

- many luxury markets (in different countries) were little or not at all researched;

- in most countries, specialized literature on marketing of luxury goods is lacking;

However the present study has some limits, as the authors took into consideration only the materials to which they had access especially by consulting the most important databases and only the papers written in English, France, Italian, Romanian and Deutsch. Yet, we have the conviction that we have considered the majority of papers existing in the

literature, as the newest articles identified in databases don't bring other references, thus the trends that have been identified are valid.

The study is a part of a research that aims to discuss the entire evolution of the luxury research trends and studies, but due to space limitations papers were separated in two: before 2005 and after 2005 evolution. Thus for a more comprehensive perspective we recommend the reading of both papers.

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