

Luxury Advertisements: Determining How Luxury Goods Corporations Use Psychological Tactics to Sell

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ABSTRACT

The luxury goods industry has many tactics to better sell and market its products to the upper class. More recently, there has been a shift in the consumer's interest in luxury products from only the rich to now the growing middle-class. Due to recent social and economic shifts, the tendency to buy more expensive goods has increased. Corporations have adapted to this, with examples like Supreme using limited timed drops to entice consumers and give the illusion of scarcity. These concepts have been so successful that even the food industry has applied them. Also, new jobs like being an influencer/content creator have given way to new ways to publicize luxury goods. This shift has also created a way for the average teenager or young adult to be empowered by the also growing secondary market. With this new industry, anyone can start their collection without having a luxurious income and profit with products that were once unattainable for most workers.

Truth Behind Luxury Advertisements: A Content Analysis on How Luxury Goods Corporations Use Psychological Tactics for Profit

What marketing tactics do luxury brands use to sell their products to the upper and middle-class? The recent tactics within the advertisement industry are discussed. The information regarding the process of designing a product to maximize sales, the surge of influencer careers, the term "hype" and the resell market will be focal points in the discussion of the luxury goods market. These terms have all been newly fostered by the marketers in the industry, meaning that the research paper will provide a new way to visualize the industry and the ways it finds profit using various psychological tricks to sell an idea and an experience, instead of just a product, to its ideal users. The market has had changes. From selling only to the upper class to now appealing to everyday consumers will be developed as it shows a tremendous recent change in the methods the entire industry develops and executes everything it does. The psychology behind most sales, with tactics like customer loyalty, the illusion of quality, and the news that people receive from the influencers that appeal to consumers is further discussed. This article also states how the middle-class has seeped its way into the market, creating and advancing the entirety of all companies' sales dramatically. The way adults and teenagers are getting empowered by an industry that was previously reserved only for the wealthy will be developed. Individuals can obtain a new outlook on what the luxury goods industry is. Additionally, this will explain the various ways in which consumers have been manipulated.

Research Question

How do luxury goods corporations use psychological tactics to sell their products?

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Literature Review

Unafraid to Splurge

Economic uncertainty is not the only factor driving the shift in spending habits. Other social and economic forces play a role. In their book, Trading Up: The New American Luxury, authors Michael Silverstein and Neil Fiske point to a couple of ongoing trends that have garnered much ink--and resulted in much spending. Citizens are getting married later in life, having fewer children, or not getting married. When marriages break up, as half of them do, newly single people tend to spend more money on themselves. The following excerpt details this by indicating that: "women have not only become an important part of the workforce; they're earning more than ever. Nearly a quarter of married women make more money than their husbands. The impact on spending habits can't be overestimated. Silverstein, the global consumer and retail practice leader for Boston Consulting Group, says 85 percent of the growth in what they call "new luxury" spending is driven by women. "Women are deciding they're going to have a taste of the good life, and they're going to have it now," he says. (Andrews & Silver, 2004)"

The information presented in this source validates the fact that society has adopted an era of indulgence. It shows us the psychology that the masses have adopted. It starts shaping up the idea of the new middle-class consumer. The information includes the book Trading Up The New American Luxury. It also uses consumer experts to further back the information provided. For these reasons, the source is credible and relevant, especially to start the investigation. With the next source, the information will be further elaborated to provide a deeper dive into how to market luxury consumer products.

Design Meets Marketing

To publicize high-end products, you need detailed knowledge about business and design. An interdisciplinary approach is best when the product is a luxury item. As said by Ketty Maisonrouge, "luxury brands sell dreams, beauty, design, and craftsmanship". To make an ideal product that appeals to the customer, you need to understand the design process. The process consists of ideation, sketching, modeling, creating, and producing. The process occurs all with the limits of budgets, scalability, and deadlines in mind. In a perfect luxury brand, creative and business employees would understand and appreciate each other's processes to develop the best product possible. In the upcoming source, the ways marketers have been changing their perspective in this design process will be elaborated on. Concerning this, the succeeding source states: according to Ketty Maisonrouge, professor of marketing at Columbia Business School and president of the LEF, interdisciplinary approaches are particularly important when the product for sale is a luxury item, "Luxury brands sell dreams, beauty, design, and craftsmanship," she points out. "To succeed in this sector, business executives need to understand the design process—which includes ideation, sketching, modeling, creating, and producing. At the same time, designers need to understand the reality of budgets, schedules, scalability, commercialization, and promotion. A program that allows creative and business minds to discover and ap- appreciate their different perspectives before entering the workforce gives students a unique experience that will guide their future careers. (Meyers, 2004)

This source will elaborate on the marketing of luxury products. Also, it discusses how design and promotion are intertwined. The information gets credibility with an assessment from Ketty Maisonrouge, an expert on the subject. It expands the research, saying how luxury is not only product hype. It explains the process of creating a luxury item, from start to finish. Also, how to be the most effective brand by joining both departments in a luxury corporation. With the next source, we will elaborate on how the design process has been affected in recent times.



Luxury for the Middle Class

Recently, the producers of luxury products have changed their perspective on their clientele. Instead of focusing on the millionaires, they have started selling products to appeal to the average joe. As the brands are making products more affordable, the middle class is also increasing its desire to spend more on luxury goods. This is a phenomenon that has been called terms such as "luxflation" and "massification of luxury". There is a "Trading Up" concept developing in which consumers buy from the extremes, low-cost mass-merchandisers to save up for luxury goods. Instead of old money, in which people focused only on the item and the brand, new money also wants an experience associated with the purchase. This new need to create a memory-based on buying a luxurious item has changed the way brands market their products. In the next source, we will discuss how enticing this new money concept is: "in the "Trading Up" phenomenon, consumers shop at low-cost massmerchandisers for some products to free up funds for luxury purchases in other categories. It expands the luxury playing field to include 47 million households earning \$50,000 or more, not to mention those in lower-income brackets who also trade up, albeit more selectively. This trend is also borne out in a Bear, Stearns & Co. report titled "The Ultra-Affluent Consumer, which notes that consumers would rather buy two suits costing \$2,000 each than four suits at \$1,000 each. Luxury has evolved into a \$400 billion market that's expected to reach \$1 trillion by the end of the decade, according to Boston Consulting Group. But this dynamic market, where increasingly people can more than aspire to luxury goods, sparks concern as well as opportunities for marketers. When AgencySacks, New York, surveyed 16 luxury marketers for this Special Report (see charts at right), 94% said the movement to extend luxury brands to a wide array of products is diluting the value of the word "luxury." (Advertising Age, 2004)

This source is critical to the point being made in the research paper. It explains how producers of luxury products have altered their perspectives on creating new items and collections. It shows the recent change in the industry, moving to the so-called massification of luxury brands. The "Trading Up" phenomenon is also further elaborated, tying source 3 with source 1. It discusses the change from a middle class that buys average quality to one that buys from the extremes. It discusses the divide between old and new money. With the next source, we will see how this divide is happening.

The Statistics of Luxury

As F. Scott Fitzgerald said, the "rich are very different from you and me". With luxury products, the not-very-rich are finding a way to try to bridge that gap. Luxury marketers heavily desire to have a grasp on the biggest socio-economic class, the middle class. Houses that have a mean income of \$250,000 or more represent only 1.3% of the United States. Especially in the upper class, most luxury products just need to keep their clients loyal. Of those making \$100,000 a year or more, 36% said they were loyal to a liquor brand. Of those making \$200,000 a year or more, 56% said they were loyal to an electronics brand. In the next source, we will see how this loyalty is starting to seep in with the middle-class consumers: that vast middle class is a tantalizing target for luxury marketers. After all, why limit yourself to the 1.3% of U.S. households that can boast a mean income of \$250,000 or more? In a survey by Knowledge Networks and Kaagan Research, most respondents - regardless of their household income - considered themselves to be "middle class"; only 1% considered themselves "upper class". When asked in this survey how much annual income their families would need to fulfill all their dreams, the largest percentage (25%) said \$100,000 - \$250,000. That range would seem to hurl their aspirations beyond the middle class, especially since the mean income for U.S. households in 2002 was \$57,852, according to Census Bureau data. Only 14.1% of U.S. households had mean incomes of \$100,000 or more. (Eckler, 2014)

The use of this source is of utmost importance due to the quantitative information available. It explains how and why this shift from the upper class to the middle class is happening. This is with data showing %s of upper-class households in the USA, and ideal annual income. It also shows how valuable is the online industry to the selling of luxury goods. A very important aspect of this study is brand loyalty. It shows how rich people are attached to a specific brand, which locks the company in question to a minimum of units sold even if they



stop marketing completely. It's developed across the tech, liquor, and automobiles. With the next source, the new brand loyalty in the lower classes will be elaborated.

Affordable Luxury

Christian Louboutin, as many other luxury brands have done, has started to offer affordable alternatives to their brand. Instead of purchasing their shoes, you can get their nail polish for a fraction of the price. Many luxury brands are stepping into new horizons like beauty products to offer alternatives at an affordable price. Marc Jacobs has executed a similar concept, selling "affordable" eyeshadow for the masses instead of having to buy their clothing, which usually retails for 4 figures. An analyst describes that this new idea functions similar to perfume, in which consumers do not bother about the actual quality of the product, but the brand behind it. This deepens the understanding of brand loyalty, in which the middle-class has also grown fond of: "louboutin is not the only clothing designer to enter the realm of beauty products; Tom Ford and Marc Jacobs have collections of lipstick, mascara, and nail polish -- Jacobs's retails for US\$35. Mather says she's not surprised by the designer influx. "It's about accessories, and nails are the 10 best accessories you have. It doesn't matter what size you are, what age, and it's not budget-biased." Well, it is, but for a fashion hound who longs for the Marc Jacobs sequined sweater dress (US\$1,400 at Neiman Marcus), his Twinkle Pop eyeshadow stick in teal mermaid is a comparable steal at \$35.

While Mathers wouldn't spend the money, she understands why some will. "Glamour is back. And it's pretty glamorous!" Kat Peterson, of the Luxe Life, an online fashion magazine, likewise thinks the cost is "kind of crazy." But, she adds, these days some people want head-to-toe (literally) outfits by the same brand or designer. "Those who happily spend that much on shoes won't find the price that crazy." (Curtis, 2017)

This source is very important to the advancement of the research paper as it demonstrates the change in brands focusing on rich customers to the emerging middle-class. It talks about how Louboutin has started offering a cheaper alternative to its expensive shoes with other industries. It relates the change from selling just one item to advancing in various, like merging sneakers with beauty products. It talks about important customer psychology. Around that topic, it says that the middle-class is caring more about the brand than the actual quality. This shows more with the "affordable" line of products in their collections. With the next source, the average people profiting with this loyalty is discussed.

Supreme Drops

What is a "hypebeast"? How are these so-called hypebeasts influencing the luxury landscape? A hypebeast is a pejorative term to define someone who buys, wears, and posts content with luxury clothing with the sole purpose of impressing others. Gen Z (born after 1995) is set to account for 45% of the luxury goods market by 2025. According to one marketing study, 80% of these potential buyers are influenced by social media. Supreme's drop-based model, which will be elaborated on in the paper further, is what most people associate its success with. Every Thursday at 11 am, it drops a very limited selection of its new collection. This scarcity, coupled with the hype around it and the possible competition with buying an item purchases a Supreme item an entire experience. It's not only the item something to brag about, but also being able to buy the item. With this excerpt, the market size of the industry will be elaborated on: "we are entering a new era of fashion and style, and it's being led by a generation who haven't yet chosen their GCSEs. Gen-Zers (those of us born after 1995) now control a reported £32bn in spending power in America alone, and, according to the retail consultancy Fitch, by 2020 we will represent the largest group of consumers worldwide, making up 40% of the US, Europe, and Bric countries. Gen Z is set to account for 45% of the global market for luxury goods by 2025, according to the management consultant Bain & Company. Recent research shows we're spending more money on more brands and we're doing it on Instagram — according to one marketing study published this summer, 80% of Gen-Zers are influenced by social media when shopping. So how does a pocket-money income stretch to a £300 Supreme bomber jacket? Enter the resale side hustle. Whereas Millennials may have spent their weekends trawling the racks at Beyond Retro for vintage tea dresses, the casual buying and reselling of clothing is a part of life for your average Gen-Zer. If eBay and Instagram had a baby, it would be Depop, the monstrously successful peer-to-peer social shopping app where the majority of this buying and reselling takes place. (Scriver, 2021)"

This source is one of the most important in the entirety of the research paper. This is due to the alternative it offers to this middle-class. It shows how average people and even minors are taking ownership of the luxury goods market. It has various interviews done with resellers of various ages. It also provides data showing this increase in secondary sales. This also elaborates the research, touching base on the psychology and adding a layer of depth to the resale market of the secondary market. Without this source, the research paper wouldn't be able to reach the height it deserves. It describes the drop model, which will be further discussed with the next source.

Drop Model in the Food Industry

Starting with the streetwear/luxury fashion industry, the "drop" model has proven to be a very successful marketing strategy. As mentioned before, brands like Supreme use this model to sell out their items, making them have a secondary market that has the items for sale at a much higher price than the retail one. This model has made such waves in the marketing industry that even the food industry has adopted it. We can see this happening for example with BTS x McDonalds, releasing a limited collaboration that lets fans interact with both brands in a new way. This model also makes younger consumers flock to an otherwise uninteresting product. As said previously, it's not just buying something like food or a piece of clothing anymore, it's an experience that you can share on social media. This new strategy builds brand awareness, and most importantly in the internet era, hype. With this source, we can see this hype in effect: "while we always hope that in-restaurant promotions like the BTS Meal will drive positive sales momentum for the business, at its core, these partnerships are about driving relevancy and brand affinity for our younger guest," said Alyssa Buetikofer, chief marketing officer of McDonald's Canada. Buetikofer noted that the chain started bringing these partnerships to life in the U.S. for fans by offering the favorite McDonald's orders of celebs (such as Travis Scott, when they offered the Cactus Jack meal in September 2020, and fans were so excited they ran out of ingredients). (Wheless, 2021)

The data that is extrapolated from this source, and its pertinence to the investigation is to further elaborate the "drop model". This is highly useful to describe one of the new methods used to market luxury products to the average client. It relates to the last article, mentioning how Supreme started the movement of using limited and timed drops as a marketing strategy. It discusses the BTS x McDonald's drop, and the hype around it. This shows how valuable the luxury item industry's insight into marketing is to other industries. This different way of creating demand is also critical to developing the psychological aspect of a luxury item purchase. With the next source, we will talk about another strategic way to gain customers in the industry.

Influencer Growth During the Pandemic

The recent economic turmoil due to the pandemic has affected the entire world. This even includes relationships between influencers and the brands that want promotion. Influencers create so much demand that some companies have opted out of using them, for fear that they will sell out too quickly. Brands are also shifting the way they use influencers to promote items. Instead of an individual product, now they desire these content creators to vouch for the entire brand. US digital ad spending on influencers has totaled 20%. With this new wave of TikTok creators, rates of promotion have also increased 15-30%. Also, creators are shifting their approach to what they post about. Instead of short-term deals, they are making long-term connections with brands that speak to them, making this social media marketing almost cult-like: despite the uncertainty, creators this holiday season are still in big demand, which has caused influencer rates to increase. TikTok, in particular, is receiving the bulk of interest from brands. The platform has seen a saturation of brands searching for creators, which is also driving up influencer rates. "There are so many more brands vying for their attention," said Karwowski,



adding that brands can expect to see a 15% to 30% increase in rates. Ryan Detert, CEO of Influential, echoes this, saying that the new crop of creators who have become famous on TikTok is attracting significant budgets. "We've seen brands shift campaigns by a week or so to work with a specific influencer," he said. "Influencers are the new celebrity endorsement, and brands are willing to wait to work with them." (USA Today, 2021)

This information present in this source is highly useful to the investigation as it shows another highly successful method of marketing. So successful in fact that using it too much is negative as it makes your products sell out "too quickly". This is using influencers to promote products. To further discuss the psychology of buying luxury items, elaborating on the impact of influencers is critical. Especially with the middle-class, ignoring the impact of content creators is simply impossible. The article also mentions the contradiction of using influencers during the pandemic, since a worldwide supply shortage means luxury brands don't have enough items to sell. In the next article, an example of how the average consumer pays attention to influencers will be discussed.

Travis Scott's Influence on the Luxury Resale Market

How have other recent social events affected the luxury product landscape? We can see how Travis Scott's concert affected its resale market. At his Astroworld Festival, ten people died. This event caused Nike to delay and possibly cancel the release of the Travis Scott Air Max 1. On November four, eleven days before the article was published, we can see on StockX the unreleased shoe selling in all sizes for an average of 833\$. The day after the article was published, the average sold price for the sneaker was 1695\$. This means a 103.5% increase in the price of the same pair of shoes in less than 2 weeks. We can see the average consumer's attention to what influencers are doing/making. We can see the report of this exact event with the source: "nike has paused plans to release its latest shoe collaboration with Travis Scott after 10 people died at the rapper's Astroworld Festival and mounting lawsuits. The footwear giant notified fans of its decision on its sneaker release website, SNKRS. "Out of respect for everyone impacted by the tragic events at the Astroworld Festival, we are postponing the launch of the Air Max 1 x Cactus Jack," the update reads. There was no information provided about a new release date. (USA Today, 2021)"

The information provided in this source is required to develop the ideas presented in the research paper. With this, the power of influencers is exhibited with a recent example. It shows an event that influenced Nike's decision on the release of Travis's (the influencer) sneakers. With the supplementary data from stocks, it shows data that backs the hypothesis that consumers are paying attention to what content creators say/do. It also gives further information on what the secondary market does as a reaction to what creators post. Due to the possible cancellation of the sneaker, the prices on the resale market rose to follow suit. With the next source, the secondary luxury resale market will be elucidated.

The Secondary Market of Luxury Goods

Couples like Ryan and Linsey are making more than six figures every year selling used sneakers. Platforms like Facebook Marketplace, Poshmark, Mercari, and Stockx allow the average consumer to also own part of the market which is luxury goods. Middle-class consumers that are interested in owning products that aren't available to most can do it with flipping. The pandemic has also boosted the growth of the reselling industry. A manager at Goodwill said that this new wave of reselling has brought a lot more resellers throughout the region. Outlet store sales are also increasing dramatically. Ironically, the luxury goods market has even provided a route for the average middle-class individual to reach the upper class: "the Esbjergs are part of a growing group of Mainers who make at least part of their income as "resellers," purchasing second-hand clothing, furniture, and other items to refurbish and sell online for a profit. Though the pandemic boosted the growth of Maine's reselling community over the past few years, the number of people who make money selling secondhand goods online has been growing steadily and doesn't seem to be stopping any time soon. It can be intimidating to jump into the world of reselling, though. The Esbjergs have even started training other resellers in the art of flipping



secondhand goods through what they call their Sweat Equity Fund. The couple plans to invest in 15 resellers by buying their first \$1,000 worth of inventory and guiding them through selling their first thousand pairs of shoes. They hope as the network grows, they can find resellers with experience selling other types of goods, but for now, they're focusing on what they know best. (Schipani, 2022)"

The information provided in this source is pertinent to the investigation due to the extended outlook of the industry it offers. It offers real-life examples of resellers. It also describes the secondary market, which is important when deciding what luxury product to purchase. It also discusses the divide of luxury with affordable alternatives, and how resellers don't discriminate as long as it comes with luxury margins. It provides a conclusion to the research paper. This is due to its alternative to the middle-class of owning part of the luxury resale industry. It elaborates on the platforms second-hand sellers use to distribute their goods as well.

Materials and Methods

This investigation used a laptop with a Wi-Fi connection alongside the Safari internet browser. To find the sources required for this investigation, the Safari search engine was paramount for pinpointing the necessary sources that would elucidate the research question. Although the internet connection was unstable at times, it proved sufficient to complete all the required components of this investigation. All the sources were peer-reviewed and approved by the mentor of this investigation. There was a reading process for the summarizing approach as a delineated requisite. All these corporations working in tandem created the optimal conditions for the consumption of this project. The method that proved to be most adequate for this study is qualitative content analysis. A computer using EBSCO Host on the Safari browser was utilized to provide the information in the research paper.

Results

The utilized search engine proved most useful for the selected sources of this investigation. The first source was not recent, and it dealt with information regarding the new wave of consumerism in the middle-class. The second source was not recent, and it discusses the link between design and marketing in the luxury business. The third source is not recent, and it indicates the massification of luxury, referring also to the initial source with the "Trading Up" concept. The fourth source is not recent, and it elaborates on the statistics behind how the middle-class views the upper class. The fifth source is not recent, and it shows how luxury businesses are catering to the middle-class. The sixth source is recent and talks about Supreme's hype beasts, the drop model, and its limited releases. The seventh source is very recent, and it elaborates on the drop model and how even food businesses are adopting it in their corporations. The eighth source is very recent, discussing the pandemic's supply chain shortages and how it affect the relationship between influencers and businesses. The ninth source is very recent, elaborating the eighth source with a real-world example of how the middle-class keeps a close eye on the influencers and their activities. The secondary resale market is introduced with the tenth source, which is very recent.

Discussion

The sources in the research paper help develop the main idea of the psychological tactics used by luxury marketers in companies to best sell their products. The first source discusses the consumeristic tendencies that society as a whole has been moving to. It talks about how this "hobby" of purchasing luxury goods is a form of escapism from a middle-class reality. It discusses the surge of women in the workforce, and the new money

that sector brings in. With the second source, the concept of designers and marketers working together is elaborated on, and the process that fashion designers use to make a new product. With the third source, the concept of luxury being enticing to the middle class is introduced into the research paper. The fourth source talks about how the middle-class views the upper class's materialistic tendencies. The next source elaborates on how the middle-class has adopted the concept of brand loyalty that only the rich used to have. This concept helps develop the idea of psychology in which consumers feel naturally attracted to purchase from one brand, no matter the price. In Source 6, the newer mental concepts of selling, which is critical to the complete development of the research, are discussed. The concept of a "hypebeast," Supreme's limited drop model, and the size of the luxury market is shown. Also, how the middle-class might even be empowered by something so far from their grasp as luxury. With the next source, the success of the drop model is shown. This is by the success of even food brands using the drop model. In the 8th source, the idea of influencers and their impact is started. In the source after, a real-world example (this being Travis's Scott Astroworld concert) is shown to see how the middle-class pays attention to artists and content creators. With the final source, the increasing secondary market and its empowering effect on teens and young adults are shown, offering a possible solution to escape and even embrace the psychological tactics that luxury brands use, which were once reserved for only the rich to profit from.

Conclusions and Future Study

The study has provided new information regarding the different psychological methods that luxury goods corporations use to properly market and publicize their range of products. It effectively demonstrates the recent shift in interest in luxury products from only the upper class to now being extremely coveted by the middleclass. It shows traditional concepts like brand loyalty, and also demonstrates newer ones like the term "hype", "drop", and many others. It also provides a sort of "solution" to the problem that is being pressured/addicted to buying expensive and highly sought-after items. This solution is one in which teens and adults are being empowered by the growth of the secondary market and creating new careers based on distributing and individually promoting these luxury products, which the industry's profits were once reserved for only the upper classes. Although the research question was answered and a possible solution was offered, it still has many limitations. A future researcher should investigate further, using new sources that have been peer-reviewed and studied by professional psychologists. There could also be a completely new study created based on the new secondary industry, and the many recent tactics that were only introduced in the current research paper. This currently proves to be difficult, as it's a growing industry that has only recently gained global interest. Also, there are themes mentioned, like how the women's empowerment movement has contributed greatly to the surge of the luxury market. Additionally, a deeper study into secondary markets, which occur when consumers buy more affordable products, will lead to a deeper understanding of the psychology behind sacrificing luxury over affordability. Such themes may also be a starting concept for a completely new research paper.

Limitations

The study had many hindrances during its development for many reasons. The time constraint given by the advisor made it difficult to elaborate with more sources. Also, the unexpected occurrences that happen using the internet and the computer made it even harder to elaborate properly on the sources found. EBSCO host also had its technical limitations, making it harder to provide the best information possible in the research paper. The sources used were not recent or very recent, meaning that the information is either outdated or too recent to have been accurately peer-reviewed. Most of the information available on the data provider was news, but not research done by psychologists. This means that the answer provided in the study is mostly created by inferences from these articles since no expert in the field has made a study directly relating to the psychological



tactics that luxury marketers use to sell their products. In future research, this limitation may be solved using different sources.

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