

## THE PROFILE OF LUXURY PRODUCTS CONSUMER: THE ROMANIAN CASE

Amalia DUTU<sup>1</sup>, Otilia OLTEANU<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Faculty of Economics and Law, University of Pitesti, Romania  
[pandelica.amalia@yahoo.com](mailto:pandelica.amalia@yahoo.com)

<sup>2</sup> Faculty of Economics and Law, University of Pitesti, Romania  
[olteanu.otilia@gmail.com](mailto:olteanu.otilia@gmail.com)

**Abstract:** *The future of the market is connected to the fast changing trends in customers profile and behaviours. Thus, luxury companies have started to be focused on a new consumer class that is rising nowadays and will be relevant within the close future. That is way; companies are strategically focused on understanding and attracting the younger segments of the population as Gen Z: the customers of the future. Any way the concept of luxury is debatable and depends on countries, social values and life style, culture factors etc. Even if the Romanian luxury market is still under development in the context of the low income of Romanian consumers in comparison to the West European citizens, there is a lot of growth potential. Thus, the aim of this research paper is to measure the Romanian consumers' perception of luxury brands correlated to independent variables as: gender, education, monthly revenue and age and, thus, to identify a consumer typology in this respect. In order to achieve the purpose of the research study a consumer survey was conducted in Arges County. The results of the study relived the fact that luxury perception vary on a great extent due to age, education, level of income and cultural context.*

**Keywords:** luxury products, luxury perception, luxury consumers' profile, Romanian case

**JEL Classification Codes:** M30, M31.

### 1. INTRODUCERE

Professor Neil H. Borden (1964) stated that marketing is an art, and the marketing manager, through his decisions and actions, must use all the tools at his disposal to achieve the company's goals both on short and long term. Although decisions are made in relation to the market and the situation at the time, in terms of branding, the launch, maintenance, improvement and protection of the companies follow the same structure, which is actually the marketing mix.

When it comes to luxury brands, the basic roles of marketing mix are applied different than mass brands in order to keep the image of high quality, rare products that only a few have access to in a world of democratization. Going back at the beginning of the history, luxury was defined as abundance, opulence great ease and comfort signaled by clothes, accessories or tableware made of gold, big homes decorated with precious stones or precious metals.

---

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor

<sup>2</sup> MSDA graduated



As the time passed, luxury changed its definition, but the main idea still remained the same. As Tatiana Bălan (2014) said "Luxury is something that no one needs it but everyone wants it" because it creates an image of a sophisticated, exquisite life that most of us dream of.

There are many definitions of luxury depending on different intrinsic characteristics of products, the used techniques or techno-economic characteristics of the industry (Bomsel, 1995). However, researchers have come to a consensus about the main characteristics that a luxury brand consumer is looking for. Besides signalling their status, luxury brand consumers usually are searching for beauty, rarity, high quality of the products but also for the message that luxury brands send and for an unforgettable experience endorsing the products (Godey, 2013).

Today using and displaying particular luxury branded products gives the owner prestige and a high social status, apart from any functional utility (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988). The products are expensive and often exclusive, such as Rolex or Vacheron Constantin watches, Chanel dresses, Louis Vuitton handbags, Moët champagne or Ferrari cars. In the latest years, people adopted a more casual dressing but even so they needed something to signal their status and to express their personality (Hessen, 1998) so the luxury producers found a new business opportunity by increasing the manufacturing of luxury accessories such as eye-ware, wallets, belts or scarfs (Zaichkowsky, 2000).

Apart from high quality expensive materials used for manufacturing them, luxury products also come with a strong luxury brand and a unique experience that makes consumers feel and perceive comfort (Bălan, 2014). Franca Sozzani believes that it is an old and outdated way of thinking that luxury only means expensive, high quality items that signal a specific social status because today there are people who wear or use luxury goods because they are exclusive in the way of uniqueness and special not in the way of accessible to few people. This category of consumers prefers luxury brands and items that use discreet symbols that only connoisseurs can identify them.

Big luxury brands like Chanel, Maserati or Rolex struggle to maintain this image but how do consumers actually perceive luxury brands? And more exactly, how Romanian consumers perceive luxury brands? Thus, we established the research questions.

## **2. LUXURY CONSUMERS**

The social and psychological profile of a luxury consumer differs from a non-luxury brand consumer by the following characteristics: social status, lifestyle and the stimuli that influences their decision of buying.

Usually luxury consumers explain their acquisitions by satisfying a fantasy. They are always looking for new experiences and appreciate them more than the actual luxury product. As researchers show the main clients of luxury are people of ages between 25 and 65 years old and over 60.000 euros annual income (Bălan, 2014).

On the other hand, as Bernard Dubois (1994) says, there is also a new category of luxury consumers- day trippers or excursionists. Excursionists are middle class consumers that pay attention on their usual spendings but on special occasions they buy affordable luxury products like accessories, wallets, sunglasses or perfume. In the past few years excursionists started to represent an important category for luxury brands because they started to spend more money on luxury products and that is how affordable luxury industry appeared. This is also known as democratization of luxury (Kapferer, 2009).

No matter the category, a luxury consumer is guided by a series of criterias when buying luxury goods, depending on their self-perception or non-personal factors, such as uniqueness or quality of the product.

## 2.1. Conspicuous luxury

This type of luxury consumption is linked to the need of recognition and social status of the buyer. People who are guided by such criteria when they choose one luxury brand or another seek social approval of their social status, lifestyle or even their personality. This motivation of buying luxury brands is also studied as Veblen effect (Bălan, 2014). Veblen effect refers to a specific consumer behaviour where consumers choose high priced goods despite their functionality because they believe that the higher the price, the better the quality of the goods but they also need the others to see that they buy expensive products and services and they make sure of it (Leibenstein, 1950).

Usually this category of consumers buys luxury brands that mark their products as visible as possible so that observers can easily recognize the brand (Young, 2010), for example Gucci eye-wear or Louis Vuitton bags. This phenomenon is a characteristic for emergent economies and it is frequently found on Romanian consumers' behaviour.

### a. Snob effect

The snob effect is defined as a desire to possess something only because it is extremely rare or expensive (Bălan, 2014). This strategy is used by brands that want to create this image for rich people, that they are the only one that can afford the most expensive car in the world, for example. But this is a passing strategy because it can always appear on the market another "the most expensive car, house or watch in the world" and people driven by such motivation will immediately choose the other "the most expensive product in the world" no matter the brand.

Consumers from this category are usually rich people that do not necessarily seek social recognition but for them luxury must be rare and also expensive. In this case luxury brands must advertise their goods not only as not accessible for everyone but also that are made in a very limited quantity or even only one unique product.

### b. Bandwagon effect or perceived social value

Opposite to Snob effect is Bandwagon effect (Leibenstein, 1950). The concept can be identified when a luxury product or service has a high demand because of the high number of consumers. Despite traditional view of luxury as being similar with rarity, today we are facing a democratization of luxury, which means that some luxury goods are more accessible than before. In this case, there are consumers that choose luxury brands, even though they are part of middle class society, but they want to be seen as part of a certain social group- the one that affords to buy luxury goods.

Bandwagon consumers do not emphasize the price or the uniqueness of a luxury product as they are looking for enhancing their self-esteem by being part of a group of luxury brand consumers.

This type of consumer behaviour can be associated to day trippers because they are the one that do not have the budget to frequently buy luxury goods but they want to be perceived as luxury brands consumers so they purchase "affordable" luxury products such as belts, wallets, scarfs, usually when they are on discount.

### c. Perceived emotional value or hedonist effect

Hedonist consumers pay more attention to their own feelings when buying luxury goods and as a result they will care less for price (Vigneron, 1999). Hedonists purchase luxury goods for their own pleasure and are guided by their emotional values. They decline functional values of a luxury product on behalf of beauty and feelings.

Luxury brands that address to hedonist consumers use the utility of the product to create feelings and special experiences for them, for example, BMW used for many years the motto "Sheer Driving Pleasure".

**d. Quality perception**

Quality is one of the important reasons for luxury consumers. For them, high quality luxury products means that they are hand-made and the luxury company has a strong history and tradition in manufacturing those products.

Consumers that choose luxury goods for the high quality of products are called “perfectionists” (Bălan, 2014). Perfectionists use their own perception of quality of luxury products or services and they also find high prices as arguments for quality.

For them, luxury is similar to high quality and a luxury brand must always emphasize and respect this. Of course perfectionists are also looking for tradition and authenticity of the luxury brand. Besides high quality materials that luxury brands use, this kind of consumers also appreciate if products are manufactured by hand and they easily pay a higher price for luxury goods if they are so.

**e. Four concepts of luxury**

Jean N. Kapferer (1998) demonstrates in his study conducted on young managers with high disposable income from different nationalities that there are four concepts of luxury. They were asked to give some characteristics that define luxury in their view and also to name the brand or brands that are more representative for their concept of luxury. Thus, Kapferer identified four concepts of luxury:

- the first one refers to the beauty of the objects and the excellence and uniqueness of the products. Also the most representative brands for this type of luxury were Rolls Royce, Cartier and Hermes;
- the second concept of luxury identified is related to creativity and sensuality of the products and those are best promoted by Jean Paul Gaultier;
- another category of luxury is defined as timeless and international reputation and it’s represented by Louis Vuitton and Porsche;
- the last type of luxury consumers values the rarity of products and the prestige they get from the fact that they have access to something that very few can.

The results were strongly influenced by the profile of respondents- highly educated and high income- as three of the categories are related to characteristics of the product itself meaning that they already have an important social status and do not need to show it through goods they purchase.

An interesting finding is that respondents of Kapferer’s analysis do not pay much attention to how luxury products are made or if it’s a brand with history and tradition which can mean that they purchase luxury products because of the perceived experience and the way it makes them feel.

**3. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The purpose of this paper was to explore the perceptions of Romanian consumers over luxury brands. Thus, the objectives followed during this study were:

O1: to see the most recognizable luxury brands among Romanian consumers

O2: defining luxury by 5 variables

O3: to see how many respondents are luxury consumers

O4: finding out the reason for buying luxury branded goods

O5: to find out if Romanian consumers gather information about luxury products before they purchase them

O6: to see if respondents are willing to buy counterfeit products

O7: to identify the reason why they would buy counterfeit products

For measurement purpose there was used a five-point Liker scale. The researched group was randomly selected and it is represented by a number of 110 male and female respondents with ages between 18 and 65 years old. The data were analyzed using SPSS. The following hypotheses were tested:

H1: 80% of respondents are familiar with luxury brands and do not consider premium brands as being luxury.

H2: 50% of respondents believe that luxury is a way of showing social status.

H3: 90% of respondents associate luxury with high price

H4: 56% of Romanian luxury consumers inform well before buying luxury products

H5: 40% of Romanian luxury consumers are influenced by public figures in their decision to buy luxury goods.

## 4. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

### 4.1 Descriptive statistics – univariate analysis

The results show that 99% of respondents are familiar with luxury brands and only 1% of them still believe that medium or premium brands such as Massimo Dutti, Adidas or Nike are part of luxury ones. It is surprisingly that these responses came from people who graduated university and have a monthly revenue between 3000 lei and 6000 lei. Also the most frequently stated brands were Armani, Dior, Mercedes, Gucci and Rolex.

An interesting finding was that no respondent mentioned a Romanian luxury brand which can mean that they are not familiar with national luxury brands although there are numerous. On the other hand, Romanian luxury brands are new on the market compared to the ones with tradition and do not advertise that much as the well known luxury brands.

**Table no.1: Average of different perception upon luxury - Which of the following words describe the best luxury in your opinion?**

		Conspicuous luxury	High price	Quality perception	Exclusivity	Beauty, elegance
N	Valid	110	110	110	110	110
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		2.9727	4.4909	4.4091	3.9455	4.4818

As it can be seen in Table 2, most of Romanian consumers believe associate luxury with high price, beauty and high quality rather than being conspicuous. The average of people that consider luxury as being something unnecessary is only 2.9 while up to 4.5 respondents think that luxury is about high prices, high quality and elegance.

Last but not least exclusivity is perceived in luxury by an average of 3.9 respondents.

These findings show that Romanian consumers are still learning about luxury brands but the market is evolving in the right direction.

The results show the fact that Romanian consumers identify luxury goods as being expensive and highly qualitative. 90% of respondents think that luxury means expensive products and 84.6% of them believe that luxury products are of a superior quality.

Although there are respondents that do not necessarily consider luxury to be defined as exclusive, 72.8% of respondents consider that one of the words that describes luxury is exclusivity.

When it comes to describe luxury as being similar to beauty and elegance, it seems that most of the Romanian consumers consider it a fact. This is argued by the 90 percent of answers that consider luxury as being part of beauty. But there is also a small percentage people, 10%, who do not agree with the statement.

The results are quite surprising if we are thinking that Romanian luxury market is still developing and does not have a tradition in this area.

Also, the results show that 75.5% of respondents acquire luxury branded goods and only 24.5% of them do not buy luxury products.

**Table no.2: Reasons for acquiring luxury goods - Which of the following sentences best describe the reason why you acquire luxury goods?**

		Quality as a reason for buying luxury goods	Acquiring luxury brands because of the brand	Acquiring luxury brands because it makes the buyer feel good	Influence of public figures	Influence of limited quantities of luxury goods
N	Valid	110	110	110	110	110
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Mean		4.3273	3.8455	3.4909	2.3273	2.5000

This question is based on the main theories of luxury consumers and each reason given in the table below can be assimilated to one of the theories.

According to results the main reason for Romanian consumers to purchase luxury goods is quality. Thus, 84.5% of respondents affirm that the main reason why they purchase luxury products is quality, 10.9% are indifferent to quality of luxury products. There are only 4.5% of consumers that are very little influenced by quality of luxury goods when they decide to buy them, The first type of consumers are called “perfectionists” and luxury brands that address to them must use high quality materials and to pay attention to details. Also, those consumers appreciate authenticity and history of the brands. Although these aspects may be applied to a more sophisticated market, they can be partially applied also to Romanian consumers when it comes to high quality materials and hand made products.

The second reason why Romanian consumers buy luxury products is the brand. According to statistics, on average 3.8 consumers buy luxury goods because of the logo shown on them. In theory this is called conspicuous luxury. This means that the reason behind it is that consumers are looking for social status and recognition. They usually buy luxury brands that mark their products as visible as possible so that observers can easily recognize the brand. This finding is not surprising as it is specific to developing markets as it is Romanian market.

On the other hand, there are also Romanian consumers who purchase luxury goods for their own pleasure and are guided by their emotional values. On average 3.8 consumers decline functional values of a luxury product on behalf of beauty and feelings. This is called hedonist effect and it is surprising to have such an elevated score that shows that Romanian consumers are getting closer to the ones from mature markets.

#### 4.2. Two-variable statistical analysis

In order to analyze if education, monthly revenue and gender influence the way Romanian consumers perceive luxury, we used reports.

**Table no.3: How level of education influence the way people perceive luxury**

Level of education	Conspicuous luxury	High price	Quality perception	Exclusivity	Beauty, elegance
High school	3.3529	4.8235	4.5294	3.2941	4.2353
Undergraduate	3.1569	4.5294	4.2941	4.0392	4.5294
Masters degree	2.9697	4.3939	4.4242	3.9697	4.4545
Doctorate	1.2500	3.8750	4.7500	4.6250	4.7500
Total	2.9908	4.4862	4.4037	3.9450	4.4771

**Table no.4: How level of education influence the reason why people buy luxury products**

Level of education	Quality as a reason for buying luxury goods	Acquiring luxury brands because of the brand	Influence of public figures	Influence of limited quantities of luxury goods
High school	4.0000	4.4706	2.6471	1.8824
Undergraduate	4.2353	3.7255	2.3922	2.6275
Masters degree	4.4848	3.6667	2.3030	2.2727
Doctorate	4.8750	4.0000	1.5000	3.8750
Total	4.3211	3.8440	2.3394	2.4954

According to results shown in tables 3 and 4, it seems that education has an influence on both perception of luxury and the reason for acquiring luxury products.

If we take a closer look to the first table it can be seen that the higher the level of education of consumers, the lower perception of conspicuous luxury is. On average 3.3 Romanian consumers that graduated high school believe that luxury can be identified as a way of showing off someone's status. This perception goes down as the level of education increases. On average 3.1 undergraduate consumers believe that luxury is similar to opulence, while an average of around 3 masters degree graduates have this perception of luxury. The most significant result can be seen at doctorate graduates that only an average of 1.25 respondents think that luxury is a way of showing status.

Moving on to describing luxury as high priced goods, a decreasing trend can be identified also here. Starting from an average of 4.8 high school graduate respondents that believe luxury is only about the money, this perception decreases as the level of education is higher. Between the highest mean and the lowest there is a difference of 1 unit, as on average only 3.8 doctorate graduate consumers believe that high price is the best way to characterize luxury.

There are two variables that remain balanced no matter the level of education. Quality and beauty is perceived at almost equal levels in spite of education. It is true, though that both quality and beauty of luxury is perceived more as the level of education grows but the difference is not significant. On average 4.5 high school graduates think that luxury is similar to high quality and on average 4.75 doctorate graduates perceive it. When it comes to exclusivity, the results are more different, but the ascendant trend can still be identified. In this case on average only 3.29 high school graduates believe that luxury can be described as exclusivity, while 4.6 perceive exclusivity when it comes to luxury.

When it comes to buying luxury products of services, the reason behind purchasing it seems to be also influenced by education.

According to results, the main reason why people purchase luxury goods is the high quality. This variable registered the most elevated values, as an average of 4 to 4.87 respondents stated that quality is one of the reasons for buying luxury products. The lowest value is assimilated to people that graduated high school and as the level of education grows up also grows the importance of quality of the products.

A downward trend can be seen at the influence public figures have upon luxury consumers in their decision. As table 4 shows, the highest influence VIPs have upon luxury consumers is to those who graduated high school. Around 2.6 on average sustain that are influenced by VIPs in their decision for buying luxury products. This elevated result can also be given by their age, as most of respondents are around 20 years old.

This influence gets lower as level of education increases and it reaches a mean of 1.5 doctorate graduate consumers that are influenced by public figures.

Moving on to brands as a reason for buying luxury goods, it looks that an average of 4.47 high school graduates are influenced by this variable and it is also the strongest reason for them.

This influence gets lower to an average of 3.6 masters degree respondents that are inclined to by luxury products because of the brand. Surprisingly this trend does up to an average of 4 when it comes to doctorate graduates.

In the first case, brands might be an important factor for buying luxury goods that are displaying their logs so buyers can show their social status by being part of a group of selected people that can afford expensive products. On the other hand, doctorate graduates might take into consideration the brand of a luxury product because they are loyal to some brands that promote the same values as theirs, offer goods of a certain quality standard that are probably handmade.

Last but not least, exclusivity does not play an important role for Romanian consumers in purchasing luxury goods. Limited quantities of luxury products are a reason for buying them for around 3.8 doctorate graduates. This value drops as the level of education goes down. According to the findings only an average 1.8 respondents that graduated high school consider exclusivity of luxury products a reason for acquiring them.

After this analysis a picture of Romanian luxury consumers can be done depending on their level of education.

Considering the findings from the above table, Romanian luxury consumers that graduated high school are more interested in brands and quality of the products than the exclusivity of products. Also, they take into consideration which brands are advertised by different public figures.

Moving on to undergraduates, Romanian consumers pay the highest attention to the quality of the products and then to the brand. They are also more interested in the exclusivity of the products they are buying rather than certain famous people that promote luxury brands.

Romanian luxury consumers that graduated a master's degree take into consideration quality of the products they buy but also the brand they are buying. On the other hand they are little interested in both exclusivity and promotion of the products.

The last level of education that it was analyzed was doctorate. Romanians who graduated this level of education are the ones that are the most influenced by the quality of luxury products and exclusivity. They are also considering specific brands that promote certain social values and different ways of manufacturing, but they are the last ones to be influenced by public figures when buying luxury products.

**Table no.5: How monthly revenue influence the purchase of luxury goods**

Monthly revenue	Quality as a reason for buying luxury goods	Acquiring luxury brands because of the brand	Influence of public figures	Influence of limited quantities of luxury goods
less than 3000 lei	4.0000	3.5882	2.4706	1.2353
between 3000 lei- 6000 lei	4.1429	3.5714	1.9524	2.0476
between 6000-9000 lei	4.3846	4.1154	2.8077	3.0769
over 9000 lei	4.7917	4.2083	2.4167	3.5417
Total	4.3211	3.8440	2.3394	2.4954

A second analysis on what can drive people to buy luxury goods can be done by taking into consideration their revenue.

Although quality plays an important role in choosing luxury goods, as the above table shows, the more income grows the more important becomes quality. There is no significant difference between the importance of quality for consumers with an income less than 3000 lei per month or more than 9000 lei monthly revenue, but the growing trend is visible. On average 4 people with monthly revenue fewer than 3000 lei take into consideration the quality of luxury products before buying them. This value goes up to 4.1 for an income under 6000 lei, 4.38 between 6000 and 9000

and it reaches an average of 4.79 of people with an income over 9000 lei per month that consider quality an important feature of luxury goods.

The importance of the brand also increases at the same time with income. Starting from an average of 3.5 luxury consumers with a monthly income under 6000 lei that pay attention to luxury brands before purchasing, the values increase up to 4.2 Romanian consumers with a revenue over 9000 lei that choose luxury products from specific brands. This finding can be interpreted either through conspicuous and snob effect theories where they are looking for recognition of their status or it can have an explanation regarding the story behind certain brands, the emotions they create to customers or social values that brands promote. These are only some assumptions based on findings until this moment and further research is needed to create the complete profile of these consumers.

The influence of public figures is still small compared to other variables when it comes to monthly revenues, but a fluctuation can be identified in the trend. The influence that public figures have upon decision of buying luxury products is quite elevated for people with an income under 3000 lei per month, on average 2.47 of them stated that national and international stars can influence in the buying decision. This factor drops to the lowest level of an average of 1.95 luxury consumers that are influenced by public figures. This result registered for respondents with monthly income between 3000 and 6000 lei.

The highest level of influence of VIPs is upon Romanian consumers with revenues between 6000 lei and 9000 lei per month. According to table 5, there are on average 2.8 respondents that earn between 6000 lei and 9000 lei per month and that stated they are paying attention to what brands are promoted by certain stars. At this level of income we can assume that Romanian luxury consumers feel that they are getting close to influential people and they need to receive social recognition of being part of a group of important people, theory that in specialized literature is called Bandwagon Effect or perceived social value.

The importance of public figures when buying luxury products slightly goes down for people with over 9000 lei revenue per month but it still remains an average of 2.4 consumers who pay attention to what luxury brands VIPs promote.

When it comes to exclusivity and the snob effect associated to it the importance of small quantities of luxury products grows directly as the income grows. Starting from consumers with monthly revenue under 3000 lei, on average only 1.2 of them consider exclusivity important. This mean grows rapidly to 2 luxury consumers with income between 3000 lei and 6000 lei per month that pay attention to exclusivity. Moving on to consumers that earn between 6000 lei and 9000 lei per month, an average of 3 respondents confirmed that limited quantity of luxury products is one of the reasons to buy them. The influence of exclusivity reaches the peak when it comes to consumers with over 9000 lei per month as on average 3.5 of them consider limited editions an important factor to acquire luxury goods.

To summarize there are four categories of Romanian luxury consumers depending on their monthly revenue. All those consumer categories consider quality of luxury products the main reason for purchasing them no matter the revenue. Also, the name of the brand plays an important role on buying decision for all four categories, but the biggest impact is on consumers that earn over 9000 lei per month. Also, for this category of consumers exclusivity is an important decision factor while publicity of well known figures plays the least importance when they decide to buy luxury products. This pattern also repeats to respondents that earn between 6000- 9000 lei and 3000-6000 lei.

On the other hand, a particularity that only people with revenues less than 3000 lei have is the attention they pay to public figures and in the meantime the lack of interest for the exclusivity of luxury goods.

**Table no. 6: How gender influence the purchase of luxury goods**

Gender	Quality as a reason for buying luxury goods	Acquiring luxury brands because of the brand	Influence of public figures	Influence of limited quantities of luxury goods
Female	4.4483	3.5000	2.5172	2.6552
Male	4.1923	4.2308	2.1154	2.3269
Total	4.3273	3.8455	2.3273	2.5000

Another pattern that we wanted to identify is the perception of consumers depending on their gender. As table 6 shows, the most important factors women take into consideration when buying luxury goods are quality and the brand. They also pay more attention to public figures and limited quantities of luxury goods than men do but those are not the primary factors.

If we take a look at what motivates men to buy luxury products, we can see that first factor is the brand which has a greater importance for men than women as on average 4.2 men consider brands important. The second factor is quality, but they pay less attention to it than women as there is an average of 4.4 women referring to quality and 4.1 men that base their decision on quality of luxury products.

Also, men are less influenced by both VIPs and exclusivity when they decide to purchase luxury products. On the other hand, the pattern for men is quite similar to women as they pay more attention to exclusivity of products rather than publicity of different influencers.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The aim of this research was to identify the perception of Romanian consumers on luxury brands. For this purpose, a literature review was conducted in order to identify the theories of luxury consumers' typologies: conspicuous luxury, snob effect, perceived social value, hedonist effect and quality perception. These theories assume that people perceive luxury in different ways but the perception is also related to one of the characteristics of the above categories.

To identify the Romanian consumers' perception on luxury a quantitative research was conducted among Romanian luxury consumers of ages between 18 and over 65 years. Respondents' monthly revenues start from less than 3000 lei and goes up to more than 9000 lei.

The first premise of our study was that most of the Romanian consumers can easily identify luxury brands without mistaken them with premium ones. Still, as the empirical findings underlined this premise was not valid because 99% of the respondents that could name luxury brands and not premium brands.

The second hypothesis was regarding conspicuous luxury. To be more exactly, it was supposed that 50% of respondents consider luxury totally unnecessary and a way of showing social status. In fact, results show that only 40% of Romanian consumers perceive luxury as being conspicuous. This means that also the second hypothesis was rejected.

Moving on to next assumption there was expected that 90% of respondents would associate luxury with high price. Statistical results show exactly the same percentage of this variable, so the third hypothesis was accepted.

Another valid hypothesis was the fourth one. Expectations were that 56% of Romanian luxury consumers gather information before they buy luxury products. The results show a percentage of 60 respondents that are well informed about the luxury products they purchase.

The last assumption was regarding influence that well known figures have on buying decision of Romanian consumers when acquiring luxury goods.

Results were surprising as there are 23% of respondents that stated to be influenced by VIPs when they decide to buy luxury products even though the majority of respondents were between 18-30 years old. This hypothesis was not accepted.

This research triggered the most important aspects of consumers' perception on luxury brands but still much more research on this subject is needed. In order to have a clearer image on Romanian luxury consumers, luxury brands need to go deeper in this research.

Although there are some interesting findings in the research conducted on Romanian consumers, there are still aspects can be further investigated. One of these aspects is the role influential people play on buying decision to consumers between 18 and 25 years old that come from families with more than 6000 lei revenues per month. Thus, this paper brings new information about the perception of Romanian consumers on luxury brands and products and proves that luxury Romanian market is under development.

Besides the fact that most Romanian consumers still perceive luxury as something expensive, they are also perceiving the high quality of it and more important the beauty of luxury. This proved that Romanian consumers are more educated than it was expected when it comes to luxury brands. This idea is sustained by the high percentage of people that identified correctly luxury brands, by the percentage of people that inform very well before purchasing luxury goods. Last but not least, the fact that Romanian luxury market is becoming more sophisticated is proved by the small percentage of people that are willing to buy counterfeit products which means that Romanian consumers are buying luxury products for the beauty and quality of it and not necessary to show the logo of some luxury brands.

## REFERENCES

1. Neil H. Borden (1964). The concept of Marketing Mix. *Journal of Advertising Research*. 2, pp. 7-12
2. Tatiana Bălan (2014). *The Luxury Book*. Oradea: Grafor Desing
3. Grossman, G.M. and Shapiro, C. (1988), "Counterfeit-product trade", *The American Economic Review*, Vol. 78, No. 1, pp. 59-75
4. Hessen, W. (1998), "Luxe craze turns vendors to retails", *WWD*, Vol. 171
5. Arghavan Nia Judith Lynne Zaichkowsky, (2000),"Do counterfeits devalue the ownership of luxury brands?", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 9, Issue 7, pp. 485 – 497
6. Franca Sozzani, (2011), "What is the meaning of luxury?", [www.vogue.it](http://www.vogue.it)
7. Bruno Godey Daniele Pederzoli Gaetano Aiello Raffaele Donvito Klaus-Peter Wiedmann Nadine Hennigs, (2013),"A cross-cultural exploratory content analysis of the perception of luxury from six countries", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, Vol. 22, Issue 3 pp. 229 – 237
8. Bomsel, O. (1995), "Luxury industry or how to combine objects and their representations", *Annales des Mines – Re'elite's Industrielles*, July-August, pp. 14-20
9. Jean-Noël Kapferer Vincent Bastien (2009). *The Luxury Strategy Break the Rules of Marketing to Build Luxury Brands*. Londra: Kogan Page Limited
10. Bernard Dubois Gilles Laurent (1994) Attitudes towards the concept of luxury: an exploratory analysis. *Asia Pacific Advances in Consumer Research*, pp. 273-278

11. H. Leibenstein (1950) Bandwagon, Snob, and Veblen Effects in the Theory of Consumers' Demand. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, Volume 64, Issue 2, May 1950, pp. 183–207
12. Young Jee Han, Joseph C. Nunes and Xavier Drèze (2010). Signaling Status with Luxury Goods: The Role of Brand Prominence. *Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 74, No. 4, pp. 15-30
13. Franck Vigneron, Lester W. Johnson (1999). A Review and a Conceptual Framework of Prestige-Seeking Consumer Behavior. *Academy of Marketing Science Review*
14. Jean-Noël Kapferer (1998). Why are we seduced by luxury brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, pp. 44-49
15. Elena Mihai (2016). Branduri de lux pentru public select (The Luxury brands for select audiences), <https://www.capital.ro/branduri-de-lux-pentru-un-public-select-1.html>
16. Ciprian Mailat (2017). Moda de lux la romani (Luxury fashion for Romanians), <https://www.capital.ro/moda-de-lux-la-romani.html>
17. Ian Phau Min Teah, (2009), "Devil wears (counterfeit) Prada: a study of antecedents and outcomes of attitudes towards counterfeits of luxury brands", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 26, Issue 1, pp. 15 - 27