

DOI: 10.15276/ETR.06.2023.6
 DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10328155
 UDC: 659.1:004.738.5/.6
 JEL: D12, M31, O33

WHEN THE SENSORY WORLD IS SET ASIDE! THE NEW FANTASTIC WORLD OF LUXURY

КОЛИ ЧУТТЄВИЙ СВІТ ВІДХОДИТЬ НА ДРУГИЙ ПЛАН! НОВИЙ ФАНТАСТИЧНИЙ СВІТ РОЗКОШІ

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Received 07.11.2023

Кунья М.Н., Крупський О.П. Коли чуттєвий світ відходить на другий план! Новий фантастичний світ розкоші. Науково-методична стаття.

Стаття присвячена новому світу моди Pós-Covid 19. Мета статті – дослідити сприйняття покупців через цифрові інструменти, такі як електронна комерція та електронні ринки, як засіб адаптації покупців до соціального життя в Інтернеті та надати рекомендації щодо нового процесу купівлі. Проаналізовано згадки про адаптацію клієнтів за допомогою цифрових інструментів у процесі купівлі. Результати опитування, проведеного авторами Pós-Covid-19, зазначили, що цифрові інструменти навчання можуть бути корисними для моди. Дослідження представило корисну інформацію для менеджерів ринку розкоші, щоб зрозуміти використання технологій серед покупців. Належна підтримка через мобільні додатки може сприяти наміру продовжувати користуватися розкішними соціальними мережами і сприяти довгостроковим відносинам між розкішними брендами і клієнтами.

Ключові слова: мода класу люкс, цифровий маркетинг, споживчий досвід

Cunha M.N., Krupskyi O.P. When the Sensory World is Set Aside! The New Fantastic World of Luxury. Scientific and methodical article.

The article is dedicated to the Pós-Covid 19 new world of fashion. The article aims to investigate the Perceptions of customers through digital tools like e-commerce and e-marketplaces as a means of readapting customers to social life online and to provide recommendations for the new process of buying. References to customer adaptation using digital tools in the buying process have been analyzed. The results of a survey conducted by the authors of Pós-Covid-19 noted that digital learning tools can be beneficial to fashion. The study presented helpful information for luxury market managers to understand the usage of technology among customers. Appropriate support through mobile applications can contribute to the intention to continue using luxury social media and facilitate a long-term relationship between luxury brands and customers.

Keywords: luxury fashion, digital marketing, consumer experience

Many authors show that fashion goes far beyond the way of dressing. According to the author Cunha [7], fashion ranges from the simple use of everyday clothes to a much larger context, social, political, and sociological. Fashion is, therefore, defined as the habit, use, or style that influences the way of dressing, wearing, combing, and others, resulting from a certain idea, taste, pleasure, and interference from the environment.

Luxury, on the other hand, refers to something that is considered extremely pleasant, comfortable, or of high quality and that is usually associated with a sense of indulgence and superiority. Luxury is subjective and can vary from person to person, depending on your preferences, cultural and social values, and financial resources. In general, luxury is related to products, services, experiences, or objects that are considered extravagant, exceptional, or of high value [2, 4, 13].

Time [21] and natural resources [20] are becoming increasingly scarce. As a consumer, man has less and less of both time and natural materials. It is precisely in this context and after its heyday due to COVID-19 that E-commerce and new digital businesses emerge. As a way to combat these new winds, entrepreneurs in the fashion world have invested in progressively more desirable and interesting physical environments, including sensory elements such as decoration, smell, lighting, ambient music, or personalized service [2, 4, 13, 16, 19]. Effectively the physical store is still used as a strategic resource of extreme importance, especially if we talk about the luxury fashion market.

The main part

Luxury fashion in digital media. The current society and the development of the media, driven by Covid 19, have guided brands to a different world. E-

commerce has become part of our lives and social networks gained another dynamic [4, 22].

The offers of luxury fashion products arise easily and quickly, outside the physical points of sale, abdicate the "magical" ritual of face-to-face purchase, and open the way to a banal and simple evaluation. The truth is, that the virtual world presents itself as a contradiction to the essence of luxury. The digital press for the lack of human relationship, supply the touch, smell, and taste, impoverishing the shopping experience [14].

To justify the exponential increase in communication and purchases through digital platforms in the luxury market, author Zhao advocates a greater connection with consumers and a new empathy with younger users, opening doors capable of breaking down existing prejudices and creating bridges between new ideas and concepts. Zhao reiterates that there is no escaping the presence of brands on digital platforms [24].

Luxury fashion on social networks.

In terms of marketing and communication, due to the current society and the evolution of social media, many of the communication strategies are directed to social networks [6, 13].

Social media was already an important tool for luxury brands. However, with the advance of time, its presence in social networks became fundamental. The physical store will always be an asset [2]. Unlike the younger age groups, senescents still have some difficulties using online, and many doubts when it comes to paying digitally [12].

However, as high specialty goods, luxury fashion requires in operational terms a great capacity to support its positioning. Thus, it is extremely important to combine the emotional appeal with the excellence of the product. But also limited distribution, premium prices, and an atmosphere of high prestige [1].

According to Isozaki & Donzé [13], and Bishnoi & Singh [4] the online presents contradictions to the basic principles of luxury: the lack of human and personal relationship, which is an important sales tool, the exclusion of smell, taste, and touch, which causes much of the shopping experience to be lost, among others. Still, it is important to realize that, with each passing day, it becomes more visible the growth of use and access to the Internet as well as the increase of virtual purchases in the luxury market. Cairns state that the communication of luxury fashion brands on social networks increases brand exposure by promoting a closer relationship with consumers and creating empathy with young users. It should be reiterated that the digital environment enables and specifically the ability to spread communication, content sharing, new services and products, thus attracting new challenges and opportunities to existing companies [5].

Visual Digital Merchandising in fashion luxury.

Luxury brands have increased their visibility by embracing the digital world powered by Covid 19 [1]. According to a recent study, there was an approach of customers to products, through cost reduction, geographical barriers, and delivery services [17].

Visual Merchandising Digital goes through good communication in terms of product and store details, as well as experiences. The idea is to minimize the perceived risk associated with the absence of physical contact. Ferreira [10], argues that new generations are increasingly connected to online, which makes this channel an asset. Still, some situations should be taken into account, so as not to pinch the brand. Online shoppers also undergo an experience, and therefore, it is important to consider authenticity. Very important is also the availability and distribution service.

The social networks of luxury brands, excel by bold and attractive look that somehow attracts the customer and generates sales. There are already luxury brands that elect products for exclusive online sale [3, 10].

Luxury fashion in Blockchain and Metaverse.

According to author Furtado [11], the Louis Vuitton brand (LVMH) presents several technological and virtual activities, becoming a reference in the market and the process of digital transition, being one step ahead of its peers [18].

The brand uses tools such as blockchain and metaverse, which reflect an alignment with increasingly improved consumer requirements, and seek a sophisticated consumer experience, metamorphosing the brand's positioning in the digital market. Still, the brand refuses to leave behind its values of exclusivity and luxury, and therefore, technological advances are seen as a complement, an improvement in the customer experience, and also in the processes and management of companies, and not as a reversal of perspective.

Blockchain technology is seen as a complementary guarantee of authentication for consumers. It should be mentioned that it does not allow counterfeiting and piracy, thus launching a safe possibility in the returns system, second-hand sales, and auction of luxury products. Conclusion offers an extra seal of assurance of encrypted authenticity to customers looking for this solution, after all, trust is the factor that is intended to conserve [18].

Cyrille Vigneron, President and CEO of Cartier, stated that there may be interest from auctioneers in Blockchain technology in the disposal of works of art. For designers, counterfeits are a significant problem, as they cause luxury brands to lose not only in profit but also in reputation [5].

Methodology.

Taking into account the pretension of carrying out an approach to the phenomenon, with the final objective of knowing its different characteristics, it was considered that the most appropriate methodological approach to use in this research would be quantitative [8].

The quantitative research approach made use of the survey method. The sampling technique used was the convenience sampling approach due to the lack of a sampling frame [7]. The questionnaires were shared via email and on social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook from January to December 2022, obtaining a non-probabilistic sample, by Snowball composed of

1266 consumers of luxury fashion brands in social networks.

The gathered data were recorded on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet after screening returned questionnaires. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS version 27.0).

This study was based on a questionnaire survey. To ensure that the sample is composed only of consumers of luxury fashion brands, in the questionnaire, after a short introduction, respondents are asked if they are consumers of luxury fashion brands and if not, do not continue to complete the questionnaire.

This research study acted by the ethical standards of academic research, for instance, all participation was voluntary and it was conducted anonymously. No

personally identifying data was not collected. Participants were briefed on the research and provided consent before completion of the questionnaire. No incentives were provided to participants and they were allowed to withdraw from the investigation at any point.

This research was based on an adaptation made by Cunha and Santos [8] of the scale of Yadav and Rahman's [23], Perceived Social Media Marketing Activities (SMMA).

It is the author's ambition to investigate the Perceptions of customers through digital tools like e-commerce and e-marketplaces as a means of readapting customers to social life online and to provide recommendations for the new process of buying. But also to measure consumer perceptions of luxury fashion brands.

Table 1. PCMM Scale dimensions

Interactivity
Int1 – Pages allow the consumer to be up-to-date and share content
Int2 – Pages make it easy to interact with colleagues and friends
Int3 – Pages regularly interact with their fans and followers
Int4 – Pages respond to comments left by fans and followers
Informativeness
Inf1 – Pages offer rich information about your products
Inf2 – The information that the pages offer allows your fans and followers to stay informed
Inf3 – Pages provide useful information about your products
Inf4 – The information that the pages offer is easy to understand
Personalization
Pers1 – The pages give recommendations for purchases that meet the consumer's needs
Pers2 – Pages meet the needs of consumers
Pers3 – Pages make it easy to find personalized information
Pers4 – Fans and followers feel that their expectations are met by the pages
Trendiness
Ten1 – The content published on the pages shows the latest trends
Ten2 – Keeping up with the pages means being fashionable
Ten3 – Everything that is fashion trend is published on the pages
Ten4 – Pages are a good place to keep up with fashion trends
E-Word of mouth
Pas1 – Would share the pages with your colleagues and friends
Pas2 – Would recommend the pages to your colleagues and friends
Pas3 – I would encourage your colleagues and friends to visit the pages
Pas4 – I would advise your friends and colleagues to visit the pages

Source: compiled by authors on materials [8]

Results and discussion. Sociodemographic profile.

The demography of the sample has been analyzed concerning its different characteristics. Their findings showed that of the 1266 luxury consumers in this study, 62% are female (760 respondents) while 38% are male (440 respondents). The average age is around 39 years old. This data corresponds to the study of Cunha and Santos [8]. This is possible to analyze in Table 2.

The academic qualifications of the sample are presented in Table 3

Table 4 presents the professional status of the respondents.

For its part and about the region of residence, 39% reside in the center of Portugal, 37% reside in the north of Portugal, 18% reside in the south of Portugal and only 6% reside in the Archipelagos of Madeira or the Azores.

Descriptive statistics. Regarding the descriptive measures, and the highest average levels of perception, the researchers present Table 5 In this it is possible to verify that dimensions.

Table 2. Age

Age	
Average: 39 years old	
Standart desviation: 12,65	
Minimum: 18 years old	Maximum: 70 yeras old
Male: 440 (38% of the sample)	Female: 760 (62% of the sample)

Source: the authors' own elaboration

Table 3. Academic Qualifications

Academic qualifications		
Secondary education	198	15%
Degree	599	47%
Postgraduate/Master	275	21%
PhD	194	17%
Total	1266	100%

Source: the authors' own elaboration

Table 4. Professional situation

Professional situation	
Employed	68%
Self-employed	11%
Unemployed	13%
Student	8%
Total	100%

Source: the authors' own elaboration

Table 5. Reliability, Structural Model Validity, and descriptive statistics

	CR	AVE	R2 M SD	M	SD
Customization	0.818	0.609	0.385	3.98	0.97
Informativeness	0.858	0.578	0.398	4.23	0.96
Trendiness	0.987	0.986	0.324	3.89	0.77
Interactivity	0.989	0.856	0.575	4.98	0.76
E-Word of mouth	0.927	0.759	0.326	4.23	0.60

Source: the authors' own elaboration

Interactivity presents an $M = 4.98$ and an $SD = 0.76$. These results are in line with those obtained by the authors Cunha and Santos varying residually from their results [8]. The same happens with the study of Yadav and Rahman (2018) for e-commerce, where the interaction dimension presents higher average levels of perception. What proves that effective interactivity is, in the context of social networks, a very important point.

Regarding the dimension of Informative Capacity, it can be verified that it presents an $M = 4.23$ and an $SD = 0.96$. Results that coincide, as mentioned in the previous dimension with the research conducted by Cunha and Santos [8].

Factorial validity.

The factorial validity of the model was evaluated with a confirmatory factor analysis, with an estimation of maximum likelihood, and the following parameters were used: the ratio of Chi-square statistics by degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) lower than 3, GFI (Goodness of Fit Index), CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) higher than 0.9, RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation) lower than or equal to 0.05, the adjustment is very good, PCLOSE (Comparative index) higher than or equal to 0.05 and MECVI (modified expected Crossvalidation index) which is a particularly suitable index for comparing models, that is, the model with lower MECVI will be considered the most stable in the population [15].

Convergent validity was estimated by the AVE value (Average Variance extracted) and discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the AVE values of the dimensions with the squares of the correlations between dimensions.

In statistics (classical test theory), average variance extracted (AVE) is a measure of the amount of variance that is captured by a construct about the amount of variance due to measurement error.

The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) can be calculated as follows:

$$AVE = \frac{\sum(\lambda^2)}{[\sum(\lambda^2) + \sum\delta]}$$

where AVE is the Average Variance Extracted;

$\sum(\lambda^2)$ – represents the sum of the squared loadings of the items on their respective latent constructs or factors;

$\sum\delta$ – represents the sum of the error variances of the items. These error variances are typically derived from a factor analysis or structural equation modeling.

Cronbach Alpha.

The reliability of dimensions and construct were evaluated with Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Cronbach's alpha, often referred to as simply "Cronbach's alpha," is a measure of internal consistency reliability for assessing the reliability or consistency of a scale or set of items used in a questionnaire or test. It is represented by the symbol α .

Cronbach's alpha is also known as "rho-equivalent reliability," and it quantifies the extent to which a set of items or questions in a measurement instrument (such as a survey) consistently measures the same underlying construct or trait. Higher values of Cronbach's alpha (typically ranging from 0 to 1) indicate greater internal consistency, implying that the items within the scale are more reliable in measuring the same construct. It is an important tool in the field of psychometrics and is often used in research and questionnaire development to ensure the reliability of measurements.

Table 6. Cronbach Alpha Values

Crownbach's Alpha	Internal consistency
$\alpha \geq 0.9$	Excelente
$0.9 \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.8 \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.7 \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.6 \geq 0.75$	Poor
$0.5 \geq \alpha$	Unacceptable

Source: compiled by authors on materials [9]

In the present study, it was found that all dimensions have a Cronbach alpha greater than 0.8 indicating a good and reliable internal consistency. It was also possible to understand that there are no asymmetry and kurtosis values that indicate psychometric sensitivity problems or deviations from normality that make it impossible to apply confirmatory factor analysis [8]. Mention the dimensions: Customization (3 items) with a Cronbach Alpha worth 0.801, Informative Capacity (4 items) with 0.862, Trendiness (4 items) with 0.962, Interactivity (4 items) with 0.976 and finally the Word Pass dimension (4 items) with 0.916. In its entirety,

the PCMM scale features a Cronbach's alpha of 0.923, which is an indicator of acceptable reliability as mentioned by Cunha and Santos [8].

First confirmatory factor analysis.

In a first confirmatory factor analysis with the 20 items of the PCMM Scale, the adjustment indices showed a good adjustment:

$$\chi^2 = 387.415, df = 160, 2/df = 2.539, p < 0.001,$$

$$GFI = 0.93, CFI = 0.97, TLI = 0.98,$$

$$RMSEA = 0.05,$$

$$PCLOSE = 0.538, MECVI = 0.862$$

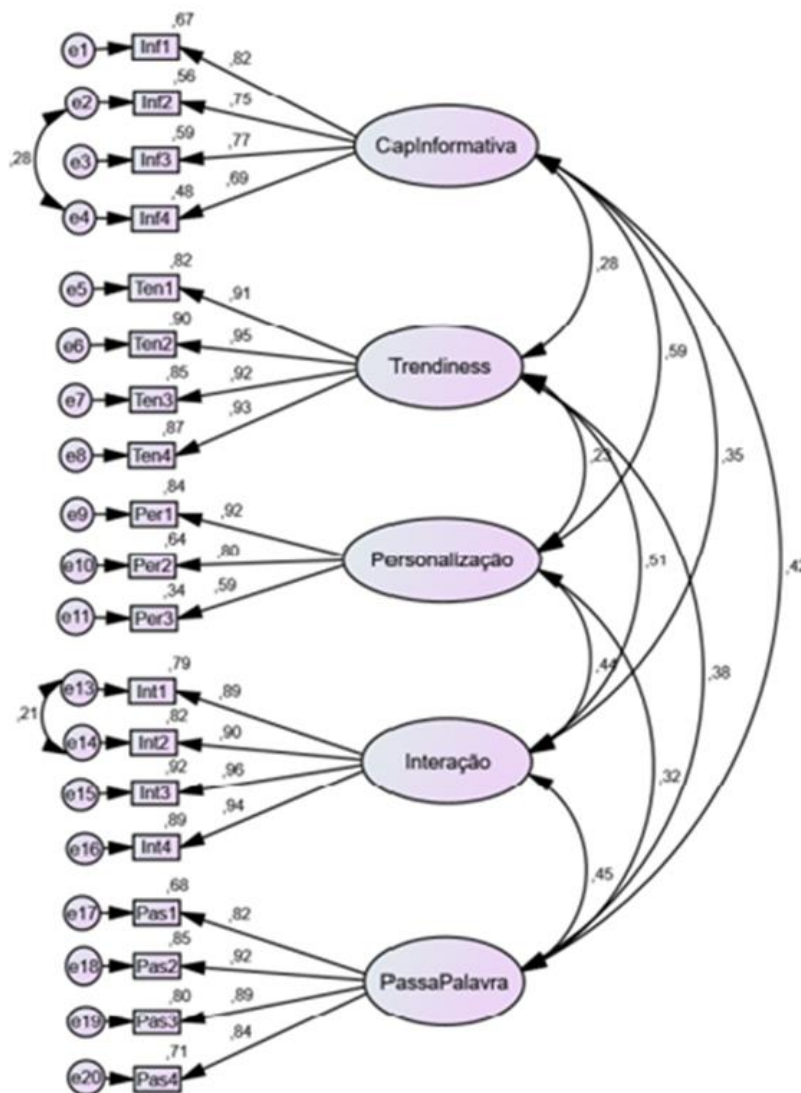


Figure 1. PCMM Scale Measurement Model

Source: the authors' own elaboration

To improve the proficiency of the adjustment, a refinement of the initial model was performed (Fig. 1). According to the remodeling rates achieved through the AMOS program one of the items in the Persistence scale was eliminated. The reality is that the remnant associated with this item embattles the dimensions of Personalization and Interaction which determined a correlation between them theoretically justifying the similarity between them.

Through Figure 2, it is also possible to perceive that all standardized factorial relations are of high value. In factorial relationships values considered high must be greater than or equal to 0.5. Regarding individual reliability, it can be said that they are presented appropriately. Which means they're higher than or equal to 0.25.

The results of the model show that the adjustment quality values are considered very good

$$\chi^2 = 263.933, df = 140, 2/df = 1.869, p < 0.001, GFI = 0.96, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, RMSEA = 0.04,$$

$$PCLOSE = 0.996, MECVI = 0.642$$

The model also showed a significantly higher quality of fit than the model initially examined.

$$\chi^2 (20) = 125.472, p < 0.05$$

Thus, it seems important to emphasize that this model has a lower MECVI suggesting a higher factor validity of the PCMM Scale in the study population.

Table 7. Reliability and Convergent and Discriminant Validity of the PCMM Scale Measurement Model

	CR	AVE	Customization	Informativeness	Interactivity	E-word of mouth
Customization	0.829	0.617				
Informativeness	0.833	0.575				
Trendiness	0.962	0.862	0.281			
Interactivity	0.969	0.856	0.356	0.511		
E-word of mouth	0.927	0.759	0.423	0.377	0.448	

Source: the authors' own elaboration

When observing Table 6, it is possible to verify the composite reliability (CR) values of the 5 dimensions. The values shown are all higher than 0.7. According to Cunha and Santos, these are appropriate values [8]. Also in this table, it can be seen that the values of the mean extracted variance (AVE) of all dimensions of this scale are greater than 0.5 and the

AVE value of each dimension is always higher than the square value of the correlations between these dimensions. Thus, the model presents convergent and discriminant validity. Regarding the correlations, it is possible to affirm that all are statistically positive and significant ($p < 0.001$).

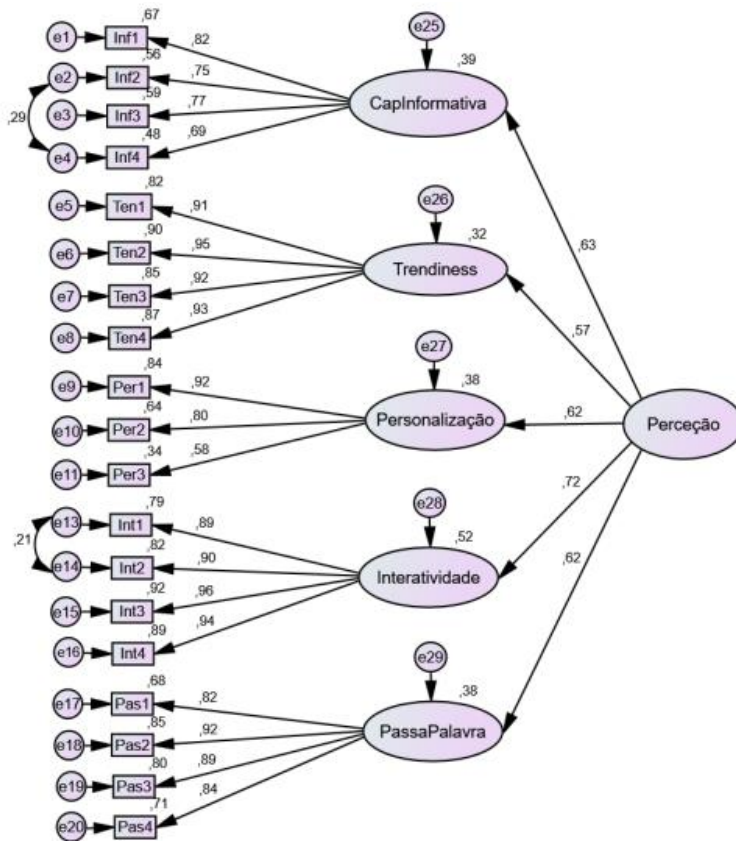


Figure 2. Structural Model for Perception

Source: the authors' own elaboration

In the Figure 2 model, the researchers present a structural model for Perception. Through it, it is possible to understand that all standardized factorial weights have high values with orders greater than or equal to 0.5 and appropriate individual reliability since they have values greater than or equal to 0.25. Similarly, the figures for the quality of adjustment are considered good.

$$\chi^2 = 358.811, df = 145, 3/df = 2.475, \\ p < 0.001, GFI = 0.95, CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.98, \\ RMSEA = 0.05, PCLOSE = 0.444)$$

In light of all the assessments made during this investigation, it was possible to reach some conclusions. The perception of luxury consumers is more intense in interactivity. This fact does not go towards the study of the authors Yadav and Rahman (2018) since in this study it is mentioned that perception is revealed with greater intensity in the Word-Pass dimension, followed by the interactivity and Personalization dimensions.

A structural model for perception is a conceptual framework or representation that seeks to explain how perception works. It typically involves various components and relationships that describe the processes involved in perceiving information from the environment. In the last figure presented in this investigation, it is possible to verify that the values of the mean-variance (AVE) of all scales are greater than 0.5, and therefore there is evidence of convergent validity. For its part and about the reliability of the scales, composite reliability (CR) values greater than 0.7 are considered adequate [8].

By analyzing Figure 3, it is possible to understand that Interactivity has the higher score, showing its importance to the consumers. The other three variables (word of mouth, Personalization, and capacity to inform) are a little bit lower, showing they are not so important to consumers. The last point is trendiness with a lower value, meaning this variable is not that important for consumers.

In fact, by this analysis, investors could easily understand that customers look for interaction as an integral part of fashion e-commerce or e-market-places.

Conclusions

This research embraces the ultimate purpose of analyzing the new world of luxury. A world that puts aside the 5 senses keeping us glued to the screen of a

computer or mobile phone. The reality is that with the arrival of the last pandemic: COVID-19, a paradigm shift has emerged. This change has made e-commerce grow exponentially [5]. In this line of thought, the ambitions of researchers have come to understand the perceptions of the luxury consumer through social networks.

The research in question demonstrates the structural validity of the scale which can help academics and professionals to better understand consumer perceptions of communication in the world of luxury. The research concludes that the main contribution is the proximity to the customer and permanent contact, which enhances consumer loyalty. It is concluded that the luxury market favors social networks as a form of communication, valuing the fast transmission of messages and the ease of interacting and receiving feedback from consumers [5, 8].

It was possible to verify that most luxury consumers spend more than 4 to 5 hours a day on the Internet, especially in the younger age groups. It was also clear that most of the sample consulted social networks through mobile phones for the sake of convenience and lack of time. The social networks privileged by these consumers are Instagram, TikTok and YouTube. This fact does not meet the study conducted by Cunha and Santos [8]. Effectively TikTok appears in both studies, but the passion for social networks "in motion", as is the case of TikTok and YouTube is something recent.

The study results are helpful for luxury market managers in understanding the usage of technology among customers. Appropriate support through mobile applications can contribute to the intention to continue using luxury social media and facilitate a long-term relationship between luxury brands and customers. However, future studies need to focus on other factors that can help in establishing long-term relationships between supermarkets and customers

In terms of future implications, it seems important to mention that it would be interesting to direct new investigations to specific audiences. It would, for example, be important to understand if the work developed by companies corresponds to what is expected by consumers and how companies can improve their performance. In a proposal for future research, it is recommended, for example, a study that could cover a larger sample, which was not limited to Portugal.

Abstract

The contemporary societal landscape, spurred by the transformative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, has ushered brands into a realm marked by unprecedented changes. E-commerce has seamlessly woven itself into the fabric of our daily lives, while social networks have assumed a heightened significance, introducing novel dynamics (Cunha, 2019). Luxury fashion products now proliferate effortlessly in the virtual sphere, divorcing themselves from traditional brick-and-mortar establishments.

This departure from the "magical" ritual of in-person purchases has paved the way for a more commonplace and straightforward evaluation process. In essence, the digital realm emerges as a paradox to the very essence of luxury, with the absence of physical interaction in the virtual space diminishing the sensory richness of the shopping experience, depriving consumers of the tactile, olfactory, and gustatory dimensions (Kumar, 2022). Despite these challenges, the surge in digital communication and transactions within the luxury market finds

validation in Zhao's (2022) argument. Zhao emphasizes the imperative of establishing deeper connections with consumers and fostering a newfound empathy, particularly among younger users. This approach catalyzes dismantling pre-existing prejudices and constructing bridges that span across innovative ideas and concepts. In no uncertain terms, Zhao (2022) asserts that a brand's presence on digital platforms is not just inevitable but essential for its continued relevance and resonance with contemporary consumers. The article aims to investigate Perceptions of customers through digital tools like e-commerce and e-marketplaces as a means of readapting customers to social life online and to provide recommendations for the new process of buying. References to customers adaptation using digital tools in the buying process have been analyzed.

The results of a survey conducted by the authors of Pós-Covid-19 noted that digital learning tools can be beneficial to fashion. The study presented helpful information for luxury market managers to understand the usage of technology among customers. Appropriate support through mobile applications can contribute to the intention to continue using luxury social media and facilitate a long-term relationship between luxury brands and customers.

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Посилання на статтю:

Cunha M.N. *When the Sensory World is Set Aside! The New Fantastic World of Luxury* / M.N. Cunha, O.P. Krupskiy // *Економіка: реалії часу. Науковий журнал*. – 2023. – № 6 (70). – С. 44-53. – Режим доступу до журн.: <https://economics.net.ua/files/archive/2023/No6/44.pdf>. DOI: 10.15276/ETR.06.2023.6. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10328155.

Reference a Journal Article:

Cunha M.N. *When the Sensory World is Set Aside! The New Fantastic World of Luxury* / M.N. Cunha, O.P. Krupskiy // *Economics: time realities. Scientific journal*. – 2023. – № 6 (70). – P. 44-53. – Retrieved from <https://economics.net.ua/files/archive/2023/No6/44.pdf>. DOI: 10.15276/ETR.06.2023.6. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.10328155.

