
Conspicuous Consumption: How do Pleasure and Guilt affect repurchase decision

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Abstract

This paper studies the interaction between emotions of guilt and pleasure and how they affect consumptions of luxurious products, as well as, the influence these two emotions have on each other. A questionnaire was developed to achieve the purpose of the study; a convenience sample of one hundred respondents was carefully selected from the upper social class customers, living in west Amman. Research findings demonstrate that while guilt may reduce consumers repurchase intention, the interaction of pleasure and guilt enhances their tendency to repurchase luxury as pleasure offsets the adverse effect of guilt

Keywords: Consumer: Behaviour, purchase decisions, pleasure, guilt, luxurious products

Jel classification : M21. M31. M54.

الملخص:

تدرس هذه الورقة التفاعل بين العواطف من الشعور بالذنب والسرور وكيف تؤثر على استهلاك المنتجات الفاخرة ، فضلا عن تأثير هذين المشاعر على بعضها البعض. تم وضع استبيان لتحقيق الغرض من الدراسة. تم اختيار عينة ملائمة من مائة مستفتى بعناية من عملاء الطبقة الاجتماعية العليا الذين يعيشون في غرب عمان. تظهر نتائج الأبحاث أنه في حين أن الشعور بالذنب قد يقلل من نية المستهلكين لإعادة الشراء ، إلا أن تفاعل المتعة والشعور بالذنب يعزز ميلهم إلى إعادة شراء الرفاهية لأن المتعة تقابل الأثر السلبي للشعور بالذنب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: سلوك المستهلك ، قرارات الشراء ، المتعة ، الذنب ، المنتجات الفاخرة

تصنيف JEL : M21. M31. M54.

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Introduction

Scholarly research and the fashion market showcase luxury on the basis of particular attributes of the luxury fashion brand, which separates it from other brands, these include, price, feel, differentiation, and quality, which all are on prevalent levels (Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009).

Status in today's general public seems to be an essential factor within social presence and individual comparison with others influence an individual's prosperity (O'Cass and McEwen, 2004). This can bring about an endeavor to inflate the ego by depicting wealth and status with the acquirement and display of merchandise to impress others, commonly known as conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1934).

Consumers usually experience a positive affect from luxury consumption, such as pleasure, this is due to the fact that luxurious items satisfy their personal sense of style or provide them with personal fulfillment (Amatulli et al., 2015; De Barnier and Valette-Florence, 2013; Westbrook and Oliver, 1991). Meanwhile, luxury consumption may bring about consumers' negative affect, such as a sense of guilt, on the grounds that it is often seen as conspicuous or inordinate spending (Boujbel and d'Astous, 2015; Lala and Chakraborty, 2015).

Literature Review

Motives of Luxury consumption

Studies show that to specific groups, conspicuous consumption means the display of wealth with symbolic items to gain appreciation or status (Chen et al., 2008; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014), high self-esteem (Sirgy, 1982; Kastanakis and Balabanis, 2014) and uniqueness (Tepper-Tian et al., 2001). Several investigations were done to discover various motives explaining consumers' desire for the luxury brands. Motivations are described by the perceived functional (quality and functionality), experiential (style, pleasure, uniqueness, conformity), and symbolic (self-expression, social status) benefits of acquiring luxury products (Choo et al., 2012; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Park et al., 2008). Furthermore, luxury products are described as goods that may carry prestige to the owner, which is closely related to the consumer's effort to obtain and maintain the social status (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Jackson and Shaw, 2009). In addition, the conspicuousness of these brands brings not only prestige, but also effect on the owner's ego and self-image (Husic and Cicic, 2009).

On the other hand, Uggla and Lashgari (2012) suggest that luxury brands carry intangible benefits, being extraordinary in comparison to the norm. Also, Kastanakis and Balabanis (2014) correlate conspicuous consumption to the snob effect; perceived unique value, which suggests that consumers purchase expensive goods not owned by the common buyers for the purpose of exclusivity. These findings support findings of past research that relate luxury fashion brands to higher levels of quality and price, exclusivity and uniqueness (Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009). People purchase goods according to their perception of what is common for their reference group and often product fulfillment results from the audiences' reaction (Wong, 1997).

Moreover, other studies found that luxury brands consumption contains a self-oriented aspect. Luxury brands are purchased for socially oriented reasons as well as for reasons related to oneself. Some of these personally oriented motives are related to self-reward (Mick and DeMoss, 1990a), self-directed pleasure; the enjoyment of luxury brands without caring about others' opinions (Kim et al., 2011), nostalgia; being emotionally attached with a certain brand that is linked with past experiences and memories (Holak and Havlena, 1992).

Emotions associated with Luxury consumption

Consumers experience mixed emotions when making the purchase decision in luxury goods (Penz and Hogg, 2011, Havlena and Holbrook, 1986). These emotions play a major role in consumer behavior (Penz and Hogg, 2011). On one hand, positive emotions such as joy and pleasure are aroused (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982) and on the other hand, negative emotions are also induced (Dubois and Laurent, 1994). luxury consumption triggers consumers' mixed emotional responses towards the good and the bad traits of luxury goods (Dubois and Laurent, 1994). Cervellon and Shammass (2013) suggested that the experience of luxury consumption triggers the feelings of both pleasure and guilt. However, other studies argue that the only emotional response that exists in the luxury purchasing process is pleasure and they denied the link between luxury consumption and the mixed emotions of pleasure and guilt (Phan et al., 2011). Supporting findings have shown that consumers are extremely focused on the pleasure induced from luxury consumption that they disregard the cost they have incurred (Vigneron and Johnson's, 1999).

Moreover, number of studies focused on the relationship between luxury consumption and the feelings of guilt associated. Guilt is one of the negative emotions that are derived from the consumption of luxury goods, as it is viewed as overbuying or conspicuous consumption (Lala and Chakraborty, 2015).

Burnett and Lunsford (1994) proposed four dimensions of guilt which are: financial guilt, health guilt, moral guilt and social responsibility guilt.

Financial guilt is the result of purchasing unnecessary products, which count as excessive spending on luxury with lack of bargaining shopping. Health guilt is aroused when individuals believe that they are not taking proper care of their health. This dimension includes consuming unhealthy products or smoking cigarettes. Moral guilt is triggered when a purchase decision violates one's moral values and beliefs. Social responsibility guilt happens when one violates one's perceived social obligations as a result of a purchase decision. For example, purchase/no purchase decisions that involve charity contributions, environmental issues, family obligations, and gift buying behaviors.

Burnett and Lunsford (1994) identified guilt as follows "a negative emotion which results from a consumer decision that violates one's values or norms. Consequently, the consumer will experience a lowering of self-esteem as a result of his decision". According to this definition, consumer guilt is directly proportional to the consumption decision. Consequently, guilt plays a major role in affecting initial, as well as repeat purchase decisions.

Pleasure is defined as individual's feelings that are induced by the enjoyment or anticipation of what is viewed as favorable or desirable, such as enjoyment, delight, and gratification (Green and Jordan, 1999). Also, Conspicuous consumption describes the possession and display of expensive items to suggest affluence, attract attention to one's wealth and inflate the ego (Veblen, 1934).

By considering the attributes stated above, a luxury brand in this study is defined as a branded product that is carefully crafted, unique, and conspicuous. For this study, we have chosen four international luxury brands, these are Chopard, Tiffany, Bvlgari and Montblanc.

Problem Statement

According to Dubois and Laurent (1994), luxury consumption usually prompts mixed emotional responses that emerge from the positive and negative attributes of luxury goods (e.g., essential and superfluous, decent and indecent). Otnes et al. (1997) associated the emergence of mixed emotions to the interplay between consumers' internal values and the external customs their culture requires. Scholars explicitly propose that consumers of luxury experience the mixed emotions of pleasure and guilt (Antonetti and Baines, 2014; Cervellon and Shammas, 2013).

Although there are many studies that serve thought-provoking insights on luxury consumers, yet there is a lack of empirical evidence to support whether the emotions of guilt and pleasure are experienced from luxury consumptions, as well as, the influence these two emotions have on each other. In order to better comprehend the roles of these two conflicting emotions, we propose two research questions: (a) Will conspicuous consumption trigger the mixed emotions of positive affect (i.e., pleasure) and negative affect (i.e., guilt)? (b) How do the mixed emotions of pleasure and guilt interplay and influence consumers repurchase decision?

Research Questions

- (1) Will conspicuous consumption trigger the mixed emotions of positive affect (i.e., pleasure) and negative affect (i.e., guilt)?
- (2) How do the mixed emotions of pleasure and guilt interplay and influence consumer repurchase decision?

Hypothesis

Hence, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H1: Conspicuous consumption of luxury products will positively lead to the sense of pleasure. (+)
- H2: Conspicuous consumption of luxury products will positively lead to the sense of guilt. (+)
- H3: Conspicuous consumption of luxury products will positively lead to the mixed emotion of pleasure and guilt. (+)
- H4: Pleasure experienced from luxury consumption will positively lead to the repurchase decision. (+)
- H5: Guilt experienced from luxury consumption will negatively lead to the repurchase decision. (-)
- H6: The interaction of pleasure and guilt experienced from luxury consumption will positively lead to the

repurchase decision, in such a way that greater pleasure will weaken the negative association between guilt and repurchase decision. (+)

Objectives

The objectives of the research project are:

1. To identify the relationship between conspicuous consumption and two types of emotions; positive affect (i.e., pleasure) and negative affect (i.e., guilt).
2. To examine whether the impact of pleasure experienced defeats the guilt experienced in a way that influences consumer repurchase decision.

Significance of Study

The significance of the study will be:

1. To supply the luxury research stream by exploring the relationship between the consumers' mixed emotions (i.e. pleasure and guilt) and the conspicuous consumption.
2. To provide guidance for marketers in focusing their marketing efforts to extend the feelings of pleasure associated with luxury purchases so that they undermine the feelings of guilt associated.

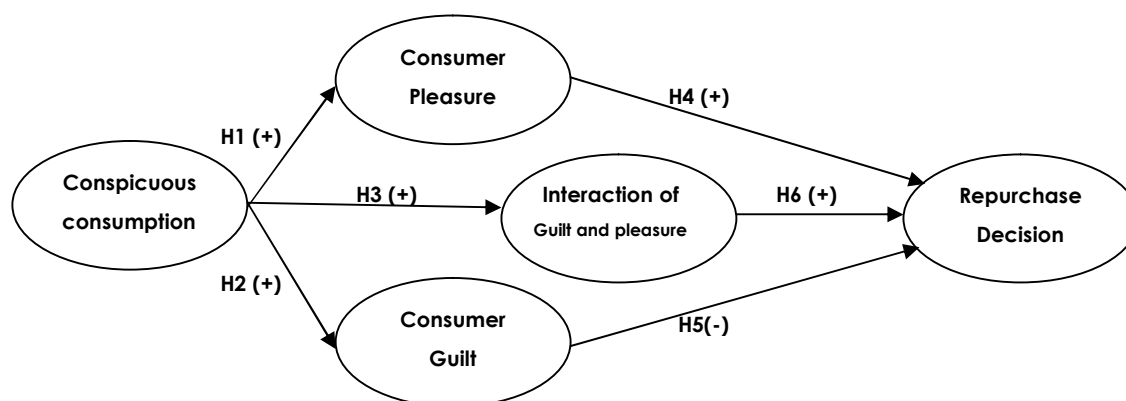
Methodology

This section presents an overview of the methods to be used in the study. Areas covered include the research design, population, sample and sampling techniques, data collection and analysis.

Research Design

As discussed in the previous section, the underlying assumption suggests that consumers can offset the feelings of guilt associated with conspicuous consumption with the feelings of pleasure they experience (Chungwha Ki Kangbok Lee Youn-Kyung Kim , 2017; Cervellon and Shammass, 2013). The aim of this study is to test this assumption on the conspicuous consumers in the Jordanian culture. To achieve this, a quantitative, non-experimental design was conducted using a survey for one hundred respondents.

Research Model



Participants

Participants here are customers of the four brands mentioned earlier. As for the questionnaire, a convenience sample of one hundred respondents was carefully selected from the upper SES (Socio-economical class), living in west Amman. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were set based on their age, gender and their social economical class. The respondents are described as; female shoppers, living in West Amman with ages ranging from 25 to 65.

Data Collection

A Single cross-sectional designed questionnaire is used as an instrument for this research. The choice for the questionnaire was based on the ease of administration, reduction in the time frame (compared to other methods) and the capability of this instrument to collect data from a large number of respondents.

Data Analysis

The instrument will be designed as structured close-ended questions, which will be rated in percentages. The percentage of respondents for each alternative will be given and analyzed. The data collected will be analyzed using the computer software known as Statistical Package for Service Solution (SPSS).

In this research, we will use the following statistical methods:

1. Descriptive analysis techniques: to measure the mean, median, mode and standard deviation of the sample.
2. Inferential statistics.

Measures

To test our hypotheses, A total of 150 respondents were approached, of which 98 satisfied the set criteria and proved to be jewelry consumers. The acquisition of luxury goods was measured over 4 international brands which are: Chopard, Tiffany & Co., BVLGARI and Mont blanc.

In the first section of the survey, respondents were asked about how frequently they purchase jewelry for themselves. Those who answered "never" were excluded from the survey. In addition, those who replied "others" to the question on whether they purchase jewelry from the four-previous mentioned stores, were further eliminated from the survey. In terms of brand, the largest number of respondents chose BVLGARI ($n = 33$), followed by Tiffany & Co. ($n = 28$), Mont Blanc ($n = 20$), Chopard ($n = 17$).

The total sample was 98 respondents, all of which were females. The average age range was between 25-35. Among the respondents, 81.6% hold a university degree, income was distributed between; less than 2000 JD (around 49%), 2,000-5,000 (43%) and above 5,000 (8%).

Table 1 provides an overview of the measurement items in this study. All items were adapted from established scales and measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3= Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always). The items for conspicuous consumption were adapted from O'Cass and Frost (2002); consumer

pleasure, from De Wulf et al. (2006) and Donovan et al. (1994); consumer guilt, from Lau-Gesk and Meyers-Levy (2009); consumer mixed emotions, from Dubé and Kalyani (2000) and repurchase intention, from Bian and Forsythe (2012). Furthermore, we confirmed the face validity of these items with an expert in marketing research before including them in the survey.

Table 1: measurement construct

Measurement Construct	Standardized loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Conspicuous consumption		0.669
I bought fine jewelry because it is highly visible to others	0.534	
I bought fine jewelry because of its prominent design.	0.536	
I bought fine jewelry because of its readily noticeable.	0.429	
Pleasure		0.876
I feel happy when I purchase fine jewelry	0.692	
Buying fine jewelry gives me pleasure	0.885	
Having fine jewelry gives me satisfaction	0.797	
Spending money on fine jewelry makes me feel content	0.596	
Guilt		0.775
I experience feeling of guilt when purchasing jewelry items	0.638	
Purchasing jewelry pieces makes me feel remorseful	0.551	
When purchasing jewelry, I feel blameworthy	0.572	
I regret spending money on jewelry	0.565	
Mixed feelings		0.388
Purchasing jewelry pieces give me a mixed feeling of pleasure and guilt	0.241	
Spending money on jewelry makes me feel happy and regretful at the same time	0.241	
Repurchase Intention		0.800
Next time I will purchase jewelry, these brands will be the top on my priority list	0.677	
The next time I go shopping, the likelihood of purchasing branded jewelry is high	0.600	
I would be willing to purchase branded jewelry in the upcoming occasions	0.619	
I will probably recommend the purchase of branded jewelry items to my friends	0.564	

Analysis

In order to test the hypotheses, this study used regression analysis. The first two hypotheses (H1 and H2) addressed the antecedents of pleasure and guilt at an individual level. The test of H1 supports the positive relationship between conspicuous consumption and pleasure ($\beta = 0.613$, $p < 0.001$). The test of H2 rejects the relationship between conspicuous consumption and guilt. The test of H3 supports the relationship between conspicuous consumption and the mixed feelings of pleasure and guilt ($\beta = 0.263$, $p = 0.009$). The test of H4

supports the positive relationship between pleasure and repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.428$, $p < 0.001$). Consequently, the test of H5 rejects the negative relationship between guilt and the repurchase intention.

Table 2: Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.466 ^a	.217	.192	.77458

Furthermore, the test of H6 confirmed a strong positive interaction effect between pleasure and guilt on the repurchase intention ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.01$). Overall, the model showed R^2 at .217, suggesting that there is a significant variance in the dependent variables.

Table 3: Summary of hypotheses test results

Hypothesis Statement	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Hypothesized relationship with DV	Results
H1	Conspicuous Consumption	Consumer Pleasure	Positive (+)	supported
H2	Conspicuous Consumption	Consumer Guilt	Positive (+)	rejected
H3	Consumer Pleasure	Mixed feeling of pleasure and guilt	Positive (+)	Supported
H4	Consumer Pleasure	Repurchase Intention	Positive (+)	Supported
H5	Consumer Guilt	Repurchase Intention	Negative (-)	Rejected
H6	Mixed feeling of pleasure and guilt	Repurchase Intention	Positive (+)	supported

Table 4: Variables Correlations

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Quantitative Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Conspicuous Consumption	1	0.612**	-0.1	0.263**	-.003	-.058	-0.71	-0.021	-.088	-.076
2. Pleasure		1	0.074	0.165	-0.059	0.032	-0.089	-0.022	0.103	-.076
3. Guilt			1	0.435**	0.188	-0.195	-0.172	-0.038	0.107	-0.014
4. Mixed Feelings				1	0.260**	-0.165	-0.193	0.249*	-0.063	-0.075
5. Repurchase Intention					1	-0.206*	-0.031	-0.193	-0.088	-0.124
6. Age						1	0.066	-0.116	0.147	-0.029
7. Income							1	0.341**	-0.023	0.012
8. Education								1	0.153	0.11
9. Frequency of buying									1	0.152
10. Average amount of spending										1

Furthermore, we tested the variables, such as: age, education, frequency of buying and amount of money spent in each purchase transaction, to check if they have further control on the analysis done. No significant effect was found.

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean		Std. Deviation	Variance	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
Conspicuous Consumption	98	3.3095	.07510	.74343	.553	.251	.244	-.546	.483
Pleasure	98	4.1286	.08761	.86727	.752	-1.666	.244	3.375	.483
Guilt	98	2.2245	.07347	.72731	.529	.283	.244	-.338	.483
Mixed feelings	98	2.8316	.08042	.79607	.634	-.273	.244	-.031	.483
Repurchase intention	98	3.3214	.08703	.86155	.742	-.386	.244	.087	.483
Age group	98	1.10	.042	.418	.175	4.124	.244	15.952	.483
Income	98	1.61	.071	.698	.487	1.073	.244	1.291	.483
Education	98	2.18	.039	.389	.151	1.659	.244	.769	.483
Frequency of buying	98	2.52	.081	.802	.644	-.984	.244	-.320	.483
Average amount of spending	98	1.49	.077	.763	.582	2.308	.244	7.578	.483
Valid N (listwise)	98								

Based on the literature review, the previously developed model depicts that the pleasure and guilt constructs mediate the relationship between conspicuous consumption and repurchase intention in a comparable manner. Hence, further to hypotheses testing, we examined the indirect effects of conspicuous consumption on the repurchase intention via two mediating variables (i.e., pleasure and guilt) to demonstrate the dual structured consumer's emotions in the relationship between luxury consumption and consumer loyalty. According to the results, there was a significant effect of conspicuous consumption on one mediator (pleasure) and the interaction of the double mediators (i.e.: pleasure and guilt), which in turn significantly influence the repurchase intention.

Discussions

According to Veblen (1934), conspicuous consumption is defined as the showing of wealth by acquiring and displaying products to impress others, this reflects the major facet that consumers perceive when defining conspicuous consumption. In particular, the study reveals that conspicuous consumption refers to aesthetic quality of branded jewelry. This refers to the perception of the brand as highly sophisticated, unique, innovative and inaccessible. In addition, this study confirms that conspicuous consumption carries some intangible benefits such as being extra-ordinary in comparison to others (Uggla and Lashgari, 2012) and the carry of branded jewelry that reflect status of exclusiveness and uniqueness (Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Okonkwo, 2007; Husic and Cicic, 2009) Moreover, the study complies with previous studies that show that the consumer of branded jewelry has some kind of prestige sensitivity on one hand and self-esteem sensitivity on the other (Grossman and Shapiro, 1988; Jackson and Shaw, 2009; Choo et al., 2012; Husic and Cicic, 2009; Park et al., 2008).

Furthermore, the study reported that consumers of branded jewelry experience high levels of positive emotional responses (i.e. pleasure) (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982). Unlike the results revealed by Dubois and Laurent (1994) and Lala and Chakraborty (2015), the findings of this study show a negligible level of guilt induced from luxury consumption, where the different levels of guilt have no effect on the feelings of pleasure. On the other hand, although consumers did not report experiencing significant feelings of guilt, they record a notable level of mixed feelings of pleasure and guilt supporting the findings of Cervellon and Shammas (2013) that suggested that the experience of luxury consumption triggers the feelings of both pleasure and guilt.

Based on Chungwha Ki Kangbok Lee Youn-Kyung Kim (2017) findings, which suggest that consumers' mixed emotions of pleasure and guilt are related to luxury fashion consumption and consumer repurchase intention, we give initial insights into these findings and test the relationship between consumer loyalty and mixed consumer emotions in the luxury consumption domain. Given that consumers often sense different emotions concurrently after a single consumption experience (Penz and Hogg, 2011) Our findings suggest that it is essential to explore the effect of the mixed emotions of positive affect (i.e., pleasure) and negative affect (i.e.,

guilt) in providing a more precise prediction of consumer loyalty. Specifically, findings of this study demonstrate that while guilt may reduce consumers repurchase intention, the interaction of pleasure and guilt enhances their tendency to repurchase luxury as pleasure offsets the adverse effect of guilt. Moreover, this research contributes to the consumer literature that discussed the impact of pleasure. Notably, we discover that consumers who experience a high level of pleasure from luxury consumption show high repurchase intention regardless of their degree of guilt experienced. This finding implies that the effect of guilt on brand loyalty is not significant and may be neglected when consumers experience a high level of pleasure.

Managerial Implication

This research provides guidance on what fine jewelry marketers should do to increase consumers' loyalty and in turn affect the repurchase intention. First, we suggest that marketers should stress on the sustainable characteristics of their product offerings (i.e. quality, durability and timelessness). In addition, they should link their product offerings with psychosocial consequences for consumers (i.e. self-esteem, and self-actualization). One of the explicit strategies that jewelry brands could apply to promote its timelessness, is to connect their classic, signature products with famous style icons. Furthermore, in order to reflect the credentials of its longevity, brand jewelry marketers may promote their products to showcase its high quality and value. Specifically, luxury brands may consider providing quality control (QC) reports, verifying that the input material used in their products meet the strict durability test standards.

In the light of our findings that showed that the impact of guilt is insignificant when consumers experience a high level of pleasure, we advise the luxury retailers to focus on maximizing the consumers' positive emotional responses. In order to do so, luxury providers need to create a heightened store atmosphere that will lead consumers to sense delightful emotions throughout their consumption experience. When it comes to the atmosphere, we suggest the use of lighting as a key component to catch the customer's attention for specific items on display. Moreover, there must be a specific ambiance present, this is done by the use of successful displays, proper mirror placements, effective illumination and cool calm atmosphere which interact to enhance the consumers' positive affects.

Limitation and future research

This study has a number of limitations, which will act as recommendations for future research in this topic. Firstly, this study is limited to the context of fine jewelry brands only. An intriguing extension of this study might be to examine whether the mixed consumer emotions of pleasure and guilt coexist and interplay in a broader business context than just fine jewelry products. Secondly, this paper adopted a general measure of consumer guilt. For future research, it may be more beneficial to consider measuring consumer guilt within more detailed settings.

Finally, we limited the various consumer emotions that can arise from luxury consumption experience to pleasure and guilt only. Referring to prior research that involves the study of mixed consumer emotions, it would be interesting to identify what other positive or negative emotions can arise concurrently from a single consumption experience and investigate how they interplay and influence consumer loyalty.

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