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STIMULI BEHIND CONSUMERS' INCLINATION TOWARD LUXURY BRANDS: A CASE STUDY OF YOUTH CONSUMERS IN COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

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Abstract

This quantitative research explores the factors influencing the preference of Sri Lankan youth consumers for luxury brands, presenting a base conceptual model to analyse these influences on inclination towards luxury brands. The study focuses on 170 youth consumers from Colombo, Sri Lanka. Results indicate that self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption impact young consumers' inclination towards luxury brands. The findings reveal the importance of understanding cultural and social dynamics in crafting effective marketing strategies for luxury goods in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: luxury brands, Sri Lanka, youth consumers, social class, conspicuous consumption, marketing strategies

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Introduction

The increasing trend towards purchasing and acquiring luxury brands among the Sri Lankan youth has been a factor worth considering (Wickramasinghe, 2023). As per the World Bank Statistics for 2022, Sri Lanka has a population of more than 22 million and counting, and the nation's economy is thriving and evolving towards middle-income status. As a result, the way customers purchase goods and services has started changing over the last decade. As stated by Hoefel & Francis (2018), the new generation's customers are concerned with fulfilling their basic needs and considering their fitness in society by trying to express themselves through purchase and consumption. Luxury brands have become an important consideration in this case, and even though they fall away from the day-to-day, essential consumption is becoming a matter of concern and holds a special place in the hearts of young Sri Lankan consumers (Wickramasinghe, 2023).

The youth segment is particularly critical to the luxury market due to their increasing purchasing power and influence on global consumption patterns. As younger consumers become more economically empowered, they exhibit a strong inclination toward luxury brands as a means of self-expression and social status. This demographic is also more responsive to digital marketing strategies, which many luxury brands have adopted to cater to their preferences (Deloitte, 2020). According to Kapferer and Bastien (2012), youth consumers are pivotal in shaping the future trajectory of luxury markets, as they tend to develop brand loyalty early, influencing long-term market trends. Additionally, the aspirational nature of luxury brands aligns closely with the psychological needs of youth for differentiation and recognition among their peers (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012).

As per the 2023 findings published by Deloitte, at the international level, the market for luxury goods spans a broader range from high-end technology, fashion, cosmetics, vehicles and many more and is now even expanding to areas such as travel, housing, furniture and related lifestyle concerns. Irrespective of their cost, luxury goods offer more than just functionality; they evoke a deeper level of emotions and provide a sense of prestige and recognition in society (Xi et al., 2022).

According to Danziger (2022), the prominent fact, in this case, is that the appeal for luxury brands has changed its socio-economic boundaries and has now entered various customer segmentations regardless of their income. This highlights the complexity of motivations and incentives driving the choice of a consumer in the mass market. The interest in luxury purchases is rising in Sri Lanka, with people increasingly travelling abroad to acquire these products. The growth in the tourism sector has positively impacted luxury sales. Surprisingly, there is limited academic research on luxury products in the context of these emerging markets (Genc, 2019). As stated by Kapfere and Pierre (2021), it is important to note that while consumers from different countries may buy the same luxury products, their motivations may not be the same. Culture plays a significant role, and the perception of value is subjective. Considering the increasing trend and attraction towards luxury brands among the Sri Lankan youth consumer segment, there is now a need to study this on a micro level and understand the underlying drivers of this trend. With reference to relevant secondary data and insights, this research explores the various motivators driving Sri Lankan youth consumers towards luxury brands. It, therefore, aims to determine the reasons behind their preferences.

Literature Review

Sri Lankan youth consumer

The young consumer population in Sri Lanka is pivotal in shaping how advertisers promote their brands. The younger generation significantly influences family spending; they essentially are the co-purchasers (Trikha & Saini, 2019). With the increasing internet and social media presence, the young consumer is more knowledgeable and influential than ever. Research done by HELVETAS Intercooperation gGmbH and Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum (SDJF) through Institute for Participatory Interaction in Development (IPID) between July 2021- December 2021reveals that a percentage of 78% in the age group 15 to 29 are heavy users of social media in Sri Lanka. (Sri Lanka Development Journalist Forum, 2021) As a result, younger age groups have a "richer luxury knowledge" as they come across many international and local brands on the internet and through social media. (Kuo & Nagasawa, 2020) The Sri Lankan youth, aged between 15 and 29, constitute a significant portion of the population, representing approximately 23.6 % (Department of Census and Statistics Sri Lanka, 2022). This demographic is characterised by a higher level of education, increased access to information, and more significant disposable income compared to previous generations. As a result, their consumption patterns are markedly different, with a noticeable shift towards luxury and premium brands. According to Kajendra & Lakmali (2017), luxury brands have become a status symbol among Sri Lankan youth, who perceive these products to enhance their social standing and express their individuality. The desire for exclusivity, uniqueness, and belonging to an elite group drives their inclination towards luxury goods (Tian et al., 2001). Moreover, peer influence and the desire to conform to social norms within their circles significantly impact their purchasing decisions (Park et al., 2008). The economic growth in Sri Lanka over the past decade has contributed to the increasing purchasing power of the youth. As Genc (2019) stated, the rise of a burgeoning middle class and the expansion of urban areas have led to greater exposure to international brands and lifestyles. This exposure, coupled with the aspirational nature of the youth, has resulted in a growing demand for luxury goods.

Luxury brands and inclination towards luxury brands

As per Beauloye (2022), in the contemporary landscape, the perception of luxury among millennials and Generation Z is not confined to exceptional quality and high prices; it involves crafting an immersive story around the brand and providing an authentic, one-of-a-kind experience. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Sri Lanka, where globalisation and tourism have significantly influenced consumer expectations and preferences. As per Kajendra and Lakmali (2017), Sri Lankan consumers, especially the youth, now seek personalised and unique experiences rather than traditional luxury offerings. Moreover, they state that the demand for personalisation in luxury goods is rising among young Sri Lankan consumers. Such personalised touches significantly build a solid brand reputation and consumer loyalty (Kajendra & Lakmali, 2017).

Stimuli behind the inclination towards luxury brands

Self-Indulgence: Self-indulgence refers to satisfying one's desires and preferences for pleasure and comfort. Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption (Veblen, 1899) reveals that individuals purchase luxury goods not only for their inherent qualities but also to display wealth and enhance social standing. This theory aligns with the observation that self-indulgence remains a strong motivator for luxury consumption among Asian consumers, as highlighted by Echikson (1995). Empirical studies have shown that self-indulgence is a significant driver of luxury consumption among Asian consumers. Echikson (1995) found that luxury purchases often symbolise personal reward and indulgence, with young consumers viewing luxury items as a means of treating themselves and experiencing personal gratification. A study by Kamakura and Du (2012) revealed that self-indulgence is linked to impulsive buying behaviour among young consumers, who often purchase luxury goods as a form of self-reward. This aligns with Wiedmann, Hennigs, and Siebels's (2007) findings, which identified hedonistic value as a critical motivator for luxury consumption.

Personalised Experience: The customer experience theory, introduced by Schmitt (1999), suggests that consumers seek holistic and memorable experiences when interacting with brands. In the luxury sector, personalised experiences enhance perceived value and create emotional connections with the brand. Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework further supports this idea, emphasising that experiences, rather than goods or services, are the primary drivers of consumer value in the luxury market. (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011) Research by Oe et al. (2022) demonstrates the importance of personalised experiences in the luxury market. A study by Wu et al. (2015) in Taiwan found that personalised service while purchasing luxury goods significantly motivates consumers. The individualised attention provided by sales staff enhances the perceived value of the luxury items and fosters a sense of importance and exclusivity among customers.

Self-Esteem: The self-concept theory by Rosenberg in 1982 explains how individuals' perceptions of themselves influence their behaviour and choices. Luxury goods are often associated with higher self-esteem and self-worth, symbolising success and social recognition. Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory also plays a role, suggesting that individuals evaluate themselves based on comparisons, driving the desire for luxury items that signify higher status and self-esteem. (Pillai & Nair, 2021). Studies by Genc (2019) indicate that Sri Lankan youth view luxury goods as high-quality items that amplify self-esteem and allow them to express their individuality. This behaviour is driven by the psychological need for status orientation, as highlighted by (Kajendra and Lakmali, 2017). Research by Dittmar (2005) supports this, showing that luxury consumption is often linked to self-identity and self-esteem. Consumers purchase luxury goods to feel good about themselves and to project an image of success and sophistication.

Social Status: The social identity theory reveals that individuals derive part of their identity from the social groups to which they belong. (Neighbors et al., 2013) Luxury brands serve as markers of social status, allowing consumers to signal their membership in elite groups. Bourdieu's (1984) theory of distinction also supports this idea, arguing that tastes and consumption patterns distinguish oneself from others and assert social hierarchies. Empirical evidence supports the idea that social status drives luxury brand consumption. Han et al. (2010) found that shopping for luxury brands elevates one's identity and status within society. The societal pressure and desire for social recognition push young consumers towards luxury brands. A study by Trigg (2001) highlights the role of social status in luxury consumption, suggesting that individuals purchase luxury goods to signal their membership in high-status groups. This is consistent with findings by Silverstein and Fiske (2003), who identified social status as a primary motivator for luxury purchases among young consumers.

Conspicuous Consumption: Veblen's (1899) theory of the leisure class introduces the concept of conspicuous consumption, where individuals purchase luxury goods to display wealth and status. This behaviour is driven by the desire to be seen and recognised, creating a social image that aligns with the individual's aspirations and societal expectations. Empirical studies by (Kajendra and Lakmali, 2017) and

Han et al. (2010) confirm that conspicuous consumption is prevalent among young Sri Lankan consumers. The motivation to purchase luxury products is to showcase economic capability and social standing, creating a social image that aligns with their aspirations. Research by Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn (1999) shows that conspicuous consumption is driven by the desire to display wealth and status. Young consumers use luxury goods to signal their economic success and distinguish themselves from their peers.

While considerable research has been conducted on the factors influencing luxury brand consumption among youth in various global and Asian contexts, there remains a significant empirical gap concerning the specific stimuli driving luxury brand preferences among Sri Lankan youth, particularly in Colombo. Existing studies, such as those by Kuo and Nagasawa (2020), have explored the role of digital media in shaping luxury consumption in broader Asian markets. However, they often fail to account for the unique cultural and socio-economic conditions of Sri Lanka. Additionally, there is a notable practice gap in how luxury brands are marketed to Sri Lankan youth. Many brands implement global strategies with minimal localisation, neglecting the distinct preferences and social dynamics of Colombo's youth. Kajendra and Lakmali (2017) highlight this lack of tailored marketing approaches who emphasise the need for more personalised brand experiences that align with the aspirations and social behaviours of young Sri Lankan consumers. The main intention of this study is to fill these gaps by providing a comprehensive analysis of the stimuli behind luxury brand consumption among youth in Colombo. By doing so, this research aims to inform luxury brands about the specific needs and motivations of this demographic, enabling them to craft more effective, culturally relevant marketing strategies that enhance brand engagement and loyalty in the Sri Lankan market.

Methodology

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework for this study was developed based on the prevailing literature findings and as per the background analysis conducted where the factors of self-indulgence, personalised experiences, self-esteem, social status and conspicuous consumption were identified as the exigent surmise stimuli behind the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination towards luxury brands. The selection of the variables self-indulgence, personalised experience, self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption is based on theoretical and empirical literature highlighting their significance in driving luxury brand consumption among Sri Lankan youth.

The hypotheses developed in this study are firmly rooted in both theoretical frameworks and empirical research that highlight the significant impact of the identified stimuli on luxury brand consumption among Sri Lankan youth. The hypothesis that **self-indulgence** is associated with luxury brand inclination (H1) is supported by Veblen's (1899) theory of conspicuous consumption, which posits that individuals purchase luxury goods for their intrinsic qualities and the personal satisfaction and social prestige they confer. Empirical evidence by Echikson (1995) further corroborates the role of self-indulgence as a motivator for luxury purchases among young Asian consumers.

The hypothesis regarding the **need for personalised experiences** (H2) is underpinned by the theory of customer experience (Schmitt, 1999) and the experience economy framework (Pine & Gilmore, 1998), which emphasise that unique and memorable brand interactions significantly enhance consumer loyalty and perceived value. This is supported by empirical studies, such as those by Oe et al. (2022), which demonstrate the critical role of personalised service in motivating luxury brand purchases.

The association between **self-esteem** and luxury brand inclination (H3) is justified by self-concept theory (Rosenberg, 1982) and social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), which suggest that luxury goods are often used to boost self-worth and gain social recognition. Studies by Genc (2019) and Dittmar (2005) provide empirical support, showing that luxury consumption is closely linked to enhancing self-identity and self-esteem.

The hypothesis concerning **social status** (H4) draws on social identity theory (Neighbors et al., 2013) and Bourdieu’s (1984) theory of distinction, both of which argue that luxury brands serve as markers of social identity and are used to signal membership in elite social groups. Empirical research by Han et al. (2010) and Trigg (2001) confirms that social status is a primary motivator for luxury brand consumption.

Finally, the hypothesis related to **conspicuous consumption** (H5) is grounded in Veblen's (1899) theory of the leisure class, which introduces the concept of conspicuous consumption as a means of displaying wealth and status. Empirical studies by Eastman, Goldsmith, and Flynn (1999) and Kajendra and Lakmali (2017) reinforce that young consumers purchase luxury goods to showcase their economic success and social standing.
These variables provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations behind luxury consumption in this demographic.

- **Self-Indulgence:** Emphasises personal reward and indulgence, aligning with theories of conspicuous consumption and empirical evidence from Asian consumer behaviour.
- **Personalised Experience**: Highlights the importance of unique and memorable experiences in enhancing brand value, supported by theories of customer experience and empirical studies.
- **Self-Esteem**: Explores the role of luxury goods in enhancing self-worth and social recognition, consistent with self-concept and social comparison theories.
- **Social Status:** Examines the use of luxury brands as markers of social identity and status, aligning with social identity and distinction theories.
- **Conspicuous Consumption:** Focuses on the display of wealth and status through luxury purchases, supported by Veblen's theory and empirical research on consumer behaviour.

The following hypotheses were developed accordingly to examine these further.

H_1: Indulgence is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.
H_2: The need for a personalised experience has an association towards the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.
H_3: Self-esteem acts are associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.
H_4: Social status is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.
H_5: Conspicuous consumption is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.
The primary conceptual framework for the analysis based on the above discussion is as follows.

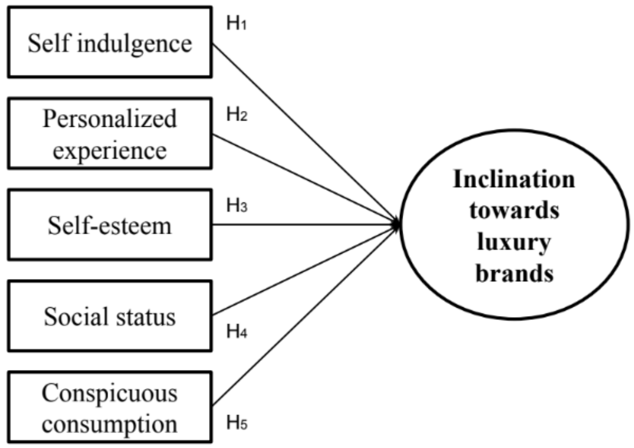

Figure 1. Conceptual Model

Data Collection Procedure

The study employed a quantitative approach to provide a structured and statistically rigorous examination of the factors influencing luxury brand consumption among Colombo, Sri Lanka youth. The convenience sampling method was chosen due to the practical constraints of time, budget, and the unknown total population size. Convenience sampling is appropriate in exploratory research, where the objective is to gather initial insights rather than achieve broad generalizability (Etikan et al., 2016). Limiting the sample to youth aged 18-29 aligns with the National Youth Policy of Sri Lanka (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Skills Development, 2023), which defines youth within this age range. Additionally, targeting this demographic is crucial as they represent a significant portion of luxury brand consumers, often driven by social status and self-expression. Although practical limitations determined the sample size of 200 participants, it is sufficient for exploratory quantitative analysis to identify patterns and relationships rather than making definitive conclusions about the entire population (Cohen et al., 2011). After accounting for non-responses, the final sample of 170 respondents ensures a robust dataset for hypothesis testing, allowing for meaningful insights into the behavioural patterns of the target demographic. The quantitative method was applied due to its ability to quantify attitudes and behaviours, providing a clear framework for hypothesis testing using statistical tools, which are essential for drawing inferences from the data (Creswell, 2014).

The questionnaire used in this study consisted of two sections. Section 1 consisted of screening questions to collect demographic data and to ensure respondents were within the age group with the ability to spend on luxury products and services. In contrast, section 2 of the questionnaire consisted of predictor constructs and inclination measures. Altogether, there were 26 questions for both sections. A five-point Likert scale was used mainly for section 2, where 1 = strongly disagree and a score of 5= = strongly agree.

Data analysis procedure

The data acquired through the structured questionnaires were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21, and the statistical tests of Pearson correlation and regression were processed to derive and interpret the findings.

Findings and Discussion

With the support of SPSS 21, the reliability and validity of the data were tested. The reliability of each variable was measured using Cronbach's Alpha. Previous studies recommend that Cronbach's Alpha values ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 can be treated as the lower limit of acceptability. Accordingly, Cronbach's Alpha values were computed for each variable. All the variables were internally consistent based on the reliability test conducted.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha

Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability
Self-indulgence	4	.763	Reliable
Personalised experience	3	.844	Reliable
Self-esteem	2	.790	Reliable
Social class	3	.918	Reliable
Conspicuous consumption	2	.733	Reliable
Inclination	5	.882	Reliable

The means of each variable were computed to understand the average response received by each independent variable.

Table 2: Summary of Means

Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean
Self-indulgence	170	3.00	5.00	4.3400
Personalised experience	170	3.00	5.00	4.3333
Self-esteem	170	3.00	5.00	4.0933
Social class	170	3.00	5.00	3.8533
Conspicuous consumption	170	3.00	5.00	3.8133
Inclination	170	3.00	5.00	3.9227

It was observed that the mean value of certain factors, such as social class, Conspicuous consumption and inclination, were closer to the neutral point. This indicated that the perceptions of those factors could have been more positive. Indulgence, Personalised experience and Self-esteem had high mean values, indicating the positive opinions of youth purchasers. Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to examine the strength and nature of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables, inclination. Before the correlation analysis, means were calculated for each independent variable to relate the different items to the respective independent variable.

Table 3: Correlation Coefficient against Inclination

Variable	Indulgence	Personalised Experience	Self-esteem	Social class	Conspicuous consumption
Person Correlation	.299**	.526**	.572**	.823**	.809**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.009	.000	.000	.000	.000
N	170	170	170	170	170

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

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

All independent variables exhibited varying positive correlations against inclination. All independent variables exhibited statistically significant relationships (significant at 0.05) with the dependent variable. Accordingly, Social class and Conspicuous consumption variables correlate highly with inclination, scoring strong positive correlation coefficients of 0.823 and 0.809, respectively. Indulgence exhibited a lower coefficient of 0.299, while Personalised experience and Self-esteem scored moderate correlations. The model fit was evaluated by calculating the adjusted R-squared value. R-squared is a statistical measure of how close the data are to the fitted regression line.

Table 4: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics					Durbin-Watson
					R Square Change	F Change	dfI	df2	Sig. F Change	
1	.923[a]	.853	.842	.22720	.853	79.773	5	69	.000	1.891

R-squared of 85.3% reveals that the regression model observes 85.3% of the total variation in the inclination. Adjusted R-squared scored 84.2%, which can be considered a high value that indicates the high predictability of the model. Further, Durbin Watson's statistic scored a value much closer to 2, indicating a lower autocorrelation level.

Table 5: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	-.311	.278		-1.116	.268		
Self-indulgence	.014	.061	.013	.235	.815	.734	1.362
Personalised experience	.069	.066	.065	1.053	.296	.562	1.780
Self-esteem	.108	.050	.126	2.151	.035	.618	1.618
Social class	.486	.061	.479	7.965	.000	.592	1.689
Conspicuous consumption	.408	.058	.431	6.995	.000	.564	1.774

Inclination (Y_i)= -0.311+0.014(Self indulgence)+0.069(Personalized experience)+0.108(Self-esteem)+0.486(Social class)+0.408(Conspicuous consumption) is the multiple linear regression model obtained. The inclination increases by 0.014%, 0.069%, 0.108%,0.486% and 0.408% for a unit increase percent in the independent variables self-indulgence, personalised experience, self-esteem, social class and conspicuous consumption, respectively. Regression analysis revealed that Self-esteem, Social class and Conspicuous consumption have significant relationships (significant at 0.05) with the dependent variable. These variables scored Beta coefficients of 0.126, 0.479 and 0.431, respectively. Based on the Beta coefficients, it could be stated that social class and Conspicuous consumption act as positive stimuli for youth inclination towards luxury goods purchases. Further, as the variance inflation factor (VIF) for all the independent variables below, multicollinearity does not exist in the regression model.

Table 6: Results of Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Result
H_1: Indulgence is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.	Rejected
H_2: The need for a personalised experience has an association towards the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.	Rejected
H_3: Self-esteem is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.	Accepted
H_4: Social status is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.	Accepted
H_5: Conspicuous consumption is associated with the Sri Lankan youth consumer's inclination toward luxury brands.	Accepted

Conclusion

The study has examined the Sri Lankan youth consumers' inclination towards luxury brands, exploring factors such as indulgence, personalised experience, self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption. Utilising quantitative methods, including reliability testing, correlation analysis, and regression, the research provided findings into the drivers influencing luxury brand preferences among the youth demographic. It was found that while indulgence and the need for personalised experiences did not significantly impact Sri Lankan youth consumers' inclination towards luxury brands, factors such as self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption emerged as crucial motivators. Self-esteem was identified as a predictor, indicating that youth consumers often perceive luxury goods as a means to boost their self-worth and project a positive social image. Moreover, the pursuit of social status and conspicuous consumption were strongly correlated with increased preferences for luxury brands among Sri Lankan youth. These findings reveal the influence of psychological and social factors on consumer behaviour within the luxury market segment in Sri Lanka. They highlight the importance of luxury brands aligning their marketing strategies with the aspirations of the youth demographic, focusing on enhancing their self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption.

Furthermore, Sri Lankan consumer behaviour reflects cultural influences shaped by caste, creed, and social class differences. These cultural dynamics are mixed with conspicuous consumption driven by pervasive social media influences. The youth population, characterised by their tech-savvy, significantly emphasises projecting a lavish lifestyle and social status through luxury consumption. Looking ahead, future research should be done to examine the understanding of why attributes like self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption hold varying levels of importance among different age groups. Exploring these differences in detail among different age groups will provide valuable insights for refining marketing strategies that resonate across diverse consumer segments within the luxury market in Sri Lanka. In conclusion, luxury goods and services providers in Sri Lanka are encouraged to tailor their offerings and communication strategies to effectively meet the evolving desires and motivations of the youth demographic concerning self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption. By doing so, they can foster stronger connections with this influential consumer segment and sustainably grow their market presence amidst dynamic cultural and consumer landscape shifts.

Managerial implications

The findings of this study provide essential insights for marketers and brand managers looking to effectively engage with Sri Lankan youth in the luxury brand market. A key implication is the need for marketing strategies that resonate with the primary motivational drivers identified: self-esteem, social status, and conspicuous consumption. As suggested by Rosenberg's (1982) self-concept theory, luxury brands play a crucial role in enhancing self-esteem among young consumers by allowing them to express their identity and achieve social recognition. Genc (2019) also supports this notion, highlighting that Sri Lankan youth perceive luxury goods as symbols of success and self-worth. Therefore, managers should focus on crafting marketing messages that emphasise the exclusivity and prestige of their brands, aligning with the youth's desire for self-enhancement and social validation. By positioning luxury brands as tools for personal achievement and social distinction, companies can significantly boost their appeal and foster strong brand loyalty among this demographic.

Moreover, the study emphasises the importance of conspicuous consumption, as highlighted by Veblen's (1899) theory of the leisure class and empirical evidence from Kajendra and Lakmali (2017). This underscores the need for brands to strategically enhance their visibility within the market through conspicuous branding efforts. Marketers should consider leveraging high-profile collaborations and endorsements that appeal to the youth's aspiration for social status and visible wealth. Additionally, the significance of personalised experiences, as highlighted by Schmitt's (1999) theory of customer experience and Pine and Gilmore's (1998) experience economy framework, suggests that luxury brands should focus on creating tailored, memorable interactions that resonate with the individual aspirations of young consumers. By offering unique and personalised experiences, brands can attract and retain young consumers, ensuring long-term engagement and loyalty in the competitive Sri Lankan luxury market.

Limitations and further research

The study's limitations primarily stem from the sample selection, which was confined only to the Youth Consumers in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Consequently, the findings may not fully capture the diverse perspectives and behaviours of Sri Lankan youth consumers across the entire country. The results provide a snapshot of the current context and are subject to variation over time and across different geographical locations. Future research could benefit from conducting a comprehensive longitudinal study encompassing broader geographical regions within Sri Lanka to mitigate this limitation. This approach would offer a more comprehensive understanding of how stimuli influencing youth inclination towards luxury brands may vary across different cultural and demographic contexts.

Moreover, there is a need for further exploration into whether the identified stimuli hold consistent relevance across diverse cultures. Comparative studies across various cultural settings would provide valuable insights into the universal versus context-specific nature of these motivational factors. Furthermore, the proposed conceptual model should be refined and expanded based on insights gained from additional research in this area. Continuous refinement and testing of the model would enhance its applicability and adaptability across different disciplines and research interests. In conclusion, while this study contributes valuable insights into Sri Lankan youth consumer behaviour towards luxury brands, future research endeavours should address these limitations and advance our understanding of the dynamic factors influencing consumer preferences in the luxury market.

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