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EFFECTS OF LUXURY BRAND AUTHENTICITY ON PURCHASE INTENTION: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION AMONG SAUDI ARABIAN CUSTOMERS

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ARTICLEINFO	ABSTRACT
	This research investigated the effects of luxury brand authenticity on purchase intentions. An empirical investigation was conducted. A total of 184 respondent's data were considered. Data were collected by utilizing different social media channels. These responses were validated and considered after initial screening. Constructs of the study were luxury brand authenticity, perceived value, social influence, and purchase intention. A total of five hypotheses were tested by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Results of the study show a significant relationship among the considered constructs. Such as brand authenticity and purchase intention, brand authenticity and perceived value, perceived value and social influence, social influence, and purchase intentions were found significant. **Disciplinary**: Management Science (Business Management). ©2020 INT TRANS J ENG MANAG SCI TECH.

1. INTRODUCTION

Luxurious market growth has increased interest among researchers globally. Apart from the global increase, in recent year's specific goods economy-based countries such as India, China, and some Gulf countries increased the growth of the luxury market (Kim & Ko, 2012). Relevant field consisting of lacking the studies in the previous years; however, some recent studies have seen a growth of luxurious marketing and services in different disciplines, which cover the research academically and practically (Berthon et al., 2009). Therefore, this study fills and provides more studied results.

According to Keller (2009), any luxury brands have at-least ten characteristics, that maintaining an image, creation intangible brand associations, should be of good quality, must have identification such as "logos", must have symbols, well packaged, secondary associations from linked

personalities, different events, global access, controlled distribution, unique and justified strategy for pricing, carefully managed brand architecture, competitors broadly defined, and the protection of legal trademarks. This definition was chosen based on covering all the attributes and characteristics.

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia. Demographically it is a huge country where the literacy ratio among the locals is high. Although Saudi Arabia is in its developing stage but still managing to maintain a high literacy ratio. According to GAS (2020), the total population of the country is (34.18) Million males/females. Survival in Saudi Arabia is not that challenging; people either are doing jobs or holding personal business. The especially new generation is more into entrepreneurial, this can be seen in the outskirt of the big cities on entry and exit points where they install the stalls of their businesses (Entrepreneur Middle East, 2019). Mostly local people are wealthy and surviving in easy manners. Young people are more technology-oriented and loved to be a part of it always. However, old and middle-aged people are not that familiar with technology but have familiarity with technology and loved to be a part of it somehow (GAS, 2020).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 EVOLUTION OF AUTHENTICITY

Perhaps the ultimate indicator of authenticity has paradoxically come through the internet. Blackshaw (2008) notes that authenticity in marketing and advertising any good or service 'is an especially important driver of credibility in the digital age, where consumers have more tools at their disposal to prove or disprove what is real and true' (ibid. p.51). The author notes that bloggers and the advent of mobile devices connected to the internet now make information and opinion on firms and brands and their statements as well as advertising. There is now global transparency that places even a higher premium on authenticity, as consumers grow cynical about claims of advertising and brands, although Hansen and Wänke's (2011) claim that luxury brands' products are couched in more abstract terms than standard brands seems to belie this assertion. Nevertheless, technology does allow consumer greater comparison of products and services, and there is indeed information on the claims to authenticity, particularly iconic cues. This is an era of global marketing where new consumers are adopting international brands to reflect their new status; however, there is also a far greater opportunity for new entrants to change the nature of luxury and the meaning of consumption.

2.2 BRAND AUTHENTICITY AND PURCHASE INTENTION

Indexicality and iconicity, as aspects of authenticity, were introduced by Mick (1986) and Peirce (1998), and further developed by others (Kingston 1999; Grayson & Martinec 2004; Liu et al., 2017). Indexical authenticity is used when the features or cues of the market offers are related to 'the real thing'. These features or cues distinguish 'the real thing' from a copy (Grayson & Martinec 2004. However, iconic authenticity refers to similarity, or a symbol or imitation of the genuine product or experience (Grayson & Martinec 2004; Liu et al., 2017). In this sense, fake brand-name bags are considered to be iconicity authentic.

There are three conditions for assessing indexicality and iconicity: 1) truth and deceit, i.e. brand-name bags should be stated as such just as imitations should be stated as such; 2) that there is no inherent contradiction between the two, is clear when a market offering is indexically authentic and when it is iconically authentic ; 3) that authenticity evaluation depends on a specific context i.e. an Italian restaurant may not be considered as being authentic if its menu is replete of Indian food (Grayson & Martinec, 2004).

However, consumers struggle to differentiate between the 'real' and 'fake' in postmodern markets (Napoli et al., 2014; Pecot et al., 2018). Throughout the literature, authenticity has historically transcended the self and the market (Fine, 2003; Kozinets, 2002; Thompson et al., 2006; Napoli et al., 2014). However, recent consumer research identifies the consumers attribute authenticity to brands (Napoli et al., 2014).

To link brand authenticity with purchase intentions several past studies linked them (Lehman et al, 2019; McIntosh & Prentice 1999), specifically however earlier studies examine purchase intention (Ercis et al., 2007; Hoong, 2011;). The impact on the individual's action and brand consumption have been researched widely and the studies show that the purchase intention having a positive influence on individual aspects and brand consumption (Schlosser et al., 2006; Yoo and Lee, 2009). Purchase intention is defined in the study of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), as "a person's location on a subjective probability dimension involving a relation between himself and some action". However, consumer behavior has not been predicted by consumer attitudes and behavioral intentions (Belk, 1985). In other words, their evaluation process might be affected by products' alternatives, brand, timing, store atmosphere, payment method, and so on (Hoong, 2011). Thus, this study considered the hypothesis.

H1: There is a significant relationship between counterfeit brand authenticity and purchase intention

2.3 BRAND AUTHENTICITY AND PERCEIVED VALUE

For luxury brands, Kapferer and Bastien (2009) note the proliferation of new consumer perceptions regarding luxury, not the least of which is the emergence of the internet and the devices by which it can be accessed. There is an issue with classic marketing techniques for elite brands and the difficulty the owners have in maintaining an image, desirability, and a premium price. Zara and Mango remain profitable in the accessible fashion market. 'The codes of luxury are cultural, in as much as the luxury brand lies at the confluence between culture and social success. money is not a measure of taste. This is why the luxury brand must first encode social distinction' (ibid. p.311).

According to Yu et al. (2011), perceived value pertains to the determinants of customer choice and decisions in retailing. Value is generally defined as that which pertains to the consumers' assessment of the overall use/utility of a product based mainly on the perceptions of what is obtained as well as what is given by the customers (El-Adly, 2019; Eid, 2015; Melsen, 2010; Zeithaml, 1988). Thus, the perceived value, in essence, is that which comprises both of the perceived quality for a product or service (the 'get' component) and the perceived price for a product or service (the 'give' component) (Melsen, 2010; Eid, 2015). The author also emphasized that the 'get' component mainly includes specific product attributes as well as high-level abstractions like convenience (Melsen, 2010; Eid, 2015; El-Adly, 2019). Several studies examined the direct link between brand authenticity and perceived value (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). By developing a conceptual model, the authors hypothesized that brand authenticity has a positive effect on perceived value. In earlier studies these dimensions have been identified and verified, adding to the credibility of this modern research (Hernandez-Fernandez & Lewis, 2019). Thus, this study considered the hypothesis,

H2a: There is a significant relationship between counterfeit brand authenticity and perceived value.

2.4 PERCEIVED VALUE AND PURCHASE INTENTION
Moreover, Caruana et al. (2000) emphasize the link between the concept of perceived value and

the utility theory. According to Lancaster (1971), the utility theory provides the main theoretical basis for the 'value construct' as this approach emphasizes the fact that consumers do not very often buy services for their sake or based solely on one aspect of reasoning. Consumers purchase as triggered by a bundle of different attributes which together, represent, a specific level of 'service quality' which is being offered by the firm within a specific price level (Caruana et al., 2000).

Therefore, customers derive their perceived value on the product or services they purchase or avail of in relation to the utility provided by such products and services, as dictated by the combination of attributes minus the 'disutility' that was represented by the paid final price (Caruana et al., 2000). In the context of services marketing, the concept of 'value construct' has admittedly, received very little attention. Nevertheless, when the concept of perceived value is tackled, it is always assumed that the perceived value of a product and the perceived value of service are similar or in other words, 'analogous' (Caruana et al., 2000; El-Adly, 2019).

Several past studies considered perceived value and purchase intentions as antecedents and consequences for each other, however further studies are recommended by past studies such as (El-Adly, 2019; Peng et al., 2019). Thus, this study considered the hypothesis,

H2b: There is a significant relationship between perceived value and purchase intention.

2.5   PERCEIVED VALUE AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Perceived value is defined as "consumers' overall assessment of the utility of a product (or service) based on perceptions of what is received and what is given" (Zeithaml, 1988), which reflects the trade-off between perceived benefit and perceived risk. Perceived benefit is related to the benefits users obtain from the products or services, while perceived risk refers to the costs incurred to obtain the products or services (Zeithaml, 1988; Wood and Scheer, 1996). Prior studies have shown that perceived value is a crucial construct in affecting user behavior in various contexts.

Extant research revealed three dimensions of perceived benefits, including utilitarian value, hedonic value, and social value. In the social commerce context, values of utilitarian and hedonic are crucial for motivating user behavior; moreover, social value plays an important role in determining user behavior (Rintamäki et al., 2006). Thus, this study attempts to explore the effects of the two aspects of perceived value on purchase intention social influence.

Sweeney and Soutar (2001) argued that users evaluate products and services not only by hedonic and utilitarian values (e.g. enjoyment and functional performance) but also by social value (i.e. social consequences). Social value is realized through the enhancement of status and self-esteem (Rintamäki et al., 2006). Social Influence in Purchasing occurs when individuals change their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in response to their society or surroundings (Turner, 1991). Several times, it has been observed that people manipulate or modify their thoughts and actions to conform to other groups or society (Chen & Seock, 2002). Several studies considered the direct link of perceived value and social influences and suggest more investigation due to diversified culture and norms (Bagozzi et al., 2000; Hashimoto and Schug 2008; Thøgersen & Zhou, 2012). Thus, this study considered the hypothesis,

H3a: There is a positive and significant relationship between perceived value and social
       influence.

2.6 SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND PURCHASE INTENTION

The impact of social influence on purchase intention of luxury goods or services was discussed and empirically supported by many authors (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004; Wiedmann et al.'s 2009). Wan et al. (2014) identified social influence (persuasion conformity), subjective norms, or peer pressure and it resulted from individual behavior or action that had been influenced by other people. Liu (2003) highlighted that consumers were basically will act and thought as same as their reference group no matter whether it comes from a positive side or negative thought.

A social influence can impact a consumer actively or passively, further, an active social influence refers to tangible verbal or physical interactions that are both recognized and shared between two parties (i.e., actor(s) and the focal customer (Argo & Dahl, 2020).

Social influence occurs when individuals change their thoughts, feelings, or behaviors in response to their society or surroundings (Turner, 1991). Several times, it has been observed that people manipulate or modify their thoughts and actions to conform to other groups or society (Chen & Seock, 2002). Its root lies in the concept of homophily which can be considered as the social dynamics in which individuals try to affiliate with others by displaying similar behavior. It may be considered as a salient factor in behavior studies because people seek social proof before trying a new product category (Thøgersen & Zhou, 2012). There are different perspectives related to social influence (Chen & Seock, 2002; Varshneya et al., 2017; Thøgersen & Zhou, 2012; Turner, 1991).

Albeit the significance, not much research has been done to see the influence of social influence on purchase intention in collectivist societies (Varshneya et al., 2017), and required further investigation in diversified culture and societies. Therefore, we argue that brand authenticity will have a similar impact on purchase intention and suggested the following hypotheses.

H3b: There is a significant relationship between social influence and purchase intention.

2.7 RESEARCH MODEL

Based on the literature review and discussion on the relationship among the considered variables for this study, the following conceptual framework has been developed.
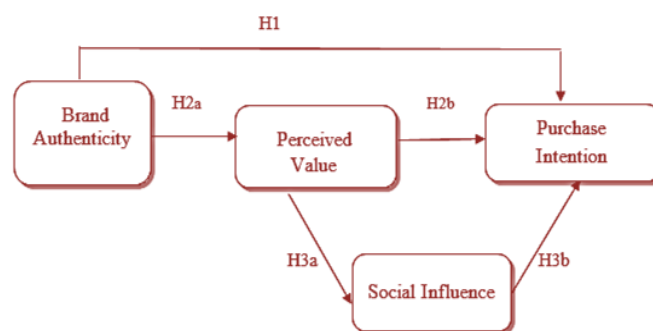

Figure 1: Proposed Model

3. METHODOLOGY

Social media sources were used to obtain data from respondents. Data were collected from different age groups and genders with different demographic characteristics and behaviors. 184 data were collected from respondents. Link of the questionnaire was shared among the respondents through social media channels.

4. STUDY ANALYSIS

The research is based on a questionnaire to collect the research data. The questionnaire was designed based on five Likert scales. Furthermore, the questionnaire was originally written in English: Social influence with three items adapted from Rizwan et al. (2014), Purchase Intention measured by four items scale, adapted from Barber et al. (2012) and Spears and Signh (2004), four items scale for perceived value adapted from Sweeney and Soutar (2001), and counterfeit brand authenticity scale with seventeen items adopted from Tran and Keng (2018). Table 1 shows all the constructs denotation with codes and items.

4.1 DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

Table 1 shows the descriptive analysis of the respondents, indicated that female respondents were higher as compared to male; which is 175 with 95.1%, meanwhile, the male respondents were only 9 with 4.9%.

Table 1: Descriptive Analysis of Respondents (Note: 1USD = 3.75SR (Saudi Riyal))

Demographics	Options	Frequency	Percent
Nationality	Saudi	173	94.0
	Non-Saudi	11	6.0
Gender	Male	9	4.9
	Female	175	95.1
Age	< 18	1	0.5
	18-27	35	19.0
	28-37	49	26.6
	38-47	51	27.7
	48-57	43	23.4
	> 57	5	2.7
Education Level	Diploma (college) degree	48	26.1
	Bachelor degree	121	65.8
	Master degree	13	7.1
	Ph.D. degree	2	1.1
Spending Trend	I spend nothing (0 SR)	88	47.8
	I spend 10000 SR per month	85	46.2
	I spend up to 20000 SR per month	11	6.0
	I spend more than > 20000 S.R	0	0
Monthly Income	Less than 5,000 SR	56	30.4
	5,000 -9,999 SR	39	21.2
	10,000-14,999 SR	40	21.7
	15,000 -19,999 SR	23	12.5
	More than 20,000 SR	26	14.1

4.2 RESULTS

This study uses Cronbach's alpha for measuring reliability (Cronbach, 1951). Further, this test shows that all the items are equally fundamentally important for defining the main construct. The reliability value (Cronbach's alpha) should be greater than 0.70. Results of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha value.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha value
Brand Authenticity	0.825
Perceived Value	0.812
Social Influence	0.818
Purchase Intention	0.882

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Table 3 gives the process mean and SD. All the values for mean and SD were considered as middle values. Based on Table 3 result, the research found all the values as middle to the mean level.

Table 3: Means and SD.

Research Variables	Mean	SD	Mean Level
Brand Authenticity	3.47	0.52571	Middle
Perceived Value	3.02	0.89652	Middle
Social Influence	3.16	0.84572	Middle
Purchase Intention	3.21	1.00278	Middle

Testing the correlation among considered hypotheses using Pearson correlation with 2-tailed significance, all the values for luxury brand authenticity, perceived value, social influence, and purchase intention, Table 4, fulfill the required and minimum criteria. Such as the values are significant at 0.01 levels, i.e., all the values <0.001.

Table 4: Pearson correlation test for hypothesis (N = 184).

Variables		Luxury Brand Authenticity	Perceived value	Social Influence	Purchase intention
Luxury Brand Authenticity	Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
Perceived value	Correlation	.406**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001			
Social Influence	Correlation	.502**	.463**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001		
Purchase intention	Correlation	.585**	.441**	.630**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	<.001	<.001	

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

Table 5 shows the hypotheses results that all the values were found as significant (<0.001).

Table 5: Hypotheses Results

Variables	T value	Sig.	Result
H1: Luxury Brand Authenticity ➜ Purchase intention	9.728	<0.001	Positive
H2a: Luxury Brand Authenticity ➜ Perceived value	5.991	<0.001	Positive
H2b: Perceived value ➜ Purchase intention	6.638	<0.001	Positive
H3a: Perceived value ➜ Social influence	7.048	<0.001	Positive
H3b: Social influence ➜ Purchase intention	10.940	<0.001	Positive

5. CONCLUSION

This study was conducted in Saudi Arabia. A total of five hypotheses were established. The study hypotheses include H1 linking between luxury brand authenticity and purchase intention, H2a linking between luxury brand authenticity and perceived value. H2b linking between perceived value and purchase intention. H3a, links between perceived value and social influence, whereas, H3b linking the association between social influence and purchase intention. All the considered hypotheses show significant relationships.

This study provides insights for marketers and practitioners to effectively understand the customers' behaviors. It also adds to the current literature on customer behavior by highlighting the impacts of perceived value and social influence on purchase intention. This study results

corroborate the findings in previous research (Argo & Dahl, 2020) and customer behavior (El-Adly, 2019; Peng et al., 2019).   Other constructs can be considered as consequences of the studies such as customer patronage or customer loyalty, since purchase intention in this study could be for the time being, whereas early studies found that customer patronage is a long-term behavior.

6. AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIAL

Information regarding this study is available by contacting the corresponding author.

7. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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