



Silent Luxury or Revenge Consumption? Reimagining the World of Luxury and Consumer Purchase Intentions Post-Covid 19

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 not only sent a health shockwave to the world but also disrupted global economies. Major shifts in luxury consumer behavior emerged as a result of the pandemic. This study aims to empirically investigate luxury purchase patterns in a post-COVID-19 world for different cultural, ethnic, and gender segments. It employs a quantitative survey with a sample of 262 participants to examine whether consumers prefer revenge or silent luxury, in-store or online channels. Results exhibit that high power distance and more masculine consumers favor revenge luxury while low power distance and more feminine ones prefer silent luxury consumption. Females and non-binary genders also exhibit higher purchase intentions for silent, more sustainable luxury consumption than males. Collectivistic, African American consumers are more inclined towards in-store luxury channels than their Non-Hispanic White counterparts. The study findings have several pertinent corporate and managerial implications as the US\$1.52 trillion world of luxury is reimagined post-COVID-19.

KEYWORDS: *luxury, sustainable, pandemic, Hofstede, ethnicity, gender, cultural, consumption*

INTRODUCTION

One of the biggest global emergencies in human history, COVID-19 struck the world in December 2019, inducing unprecedented uncertainties about both healthcare and the global economy. In the wake of such threats and financial crises, human lifestyles, consumption patterns, and preferences shifted greatly as well and are likely to further exhibit variations during the pandemic (Finsterwalder & Kuppelwieser, 2020; Manthiou, 2020). Comparisons were drawn with The Great Depression, World Wars, and the Black Plague on a macro-level front but COVID-19 followed different trajectories in terms of social lifestyles, mobility, careers, and other life domains (Settersten Jr. et al., 2020). The luxury industry experienced major shifts too as 70% of the global sales declined in Spring 2020, all luxury factories in Italy shut down where over 40% of the global luxury goods production takes place, and shopping went digital significantly (Batat, 2019; Loxton et al., 2020; McKinsey, 2020; Manthiou, 2020; Yeoman, 2011).

Unlike utilitarian product consumption, which witnessed patterns of panic purchase and hoarding across the world (Hall, Prayag, Fieger & Dyason, 2020), the luxury industry's landscape changed due to completely different factors leading to demand displacement and supply modifications (Manthiou, 2020). A major economic contraction of over 20% occurred in 2020, particularly for ready-to-wear (where it was around 20-40%), jewelry and watches (24-45%), and luxury travel (McKinsey, April 2020). Several forecasts with regards to luxury experiences for the post-COVID world made claims of "silent luxury" prevailing with a greater focus on care for Mother Earth, "craftsmanship and sustainability", owing to prolonged suffering, loss of family members, and long-term isolation (Bain & Co., 2020; McKinsey, April 2020).

Another post-COVID luxury trend that was predicted and in some places, witnessed was revenge luxury consumption. Revenge luxury consumption is conceptualized as instant, self-

gratifying conspicuous hyperconsumerism it is deemed "revenge" because it is a form of consumers' reaction to the prolonged lockdown and COVID-19 restriction barriers to consume luxury products and socializing (CNBC, 2020; Echegaray, 2020). Owing to repressed consumption during the pandemic, consumers may overcompensate for the scarcity of luxury experiences, thereby eliciting "a materialistic accumulation spree", after the pandemic (Kantar, 2020; Echegaray, 2020). Although it has been posited that consumers engage positively in luxury consumption after COVID-19, it has not been empirically determined what pattern of luxury consumption is prone to prevail (Thapa, Guzmán & Paswan, 2022).

A salient factor to take into consideration when examining patterns of luxury consumption is the role of culture, as well as gender or ethnic identities. Extant literature has, on many occasions, highlighted how luxury consumption styles are significantly influenced by cultural factors, as well as ethnic affiliations as luxury consumption is considered to be an extension of the individual's personality (Sung, Choi, Ahn & Song, 2015; Bhanot, Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2014). However, no empirical research has explored how cultural dimensions, gender or ethnic identities would influence consumers' preference for silent or revenge luxury purchase intentions for post-pandemic consumption.

With regards to purchase channels, online shopping increased significantly during the pandemic due to lockdown restrictions and the channel's inherent safety, convenience, contactless and cashless mechanism (Hall, Prayag, Fieger & Dyason, 2020; Pal & Bhadada, 2020). Although e-commerce in the luxury sector currently accounts for 4% of the total sales, it is expected to increase steadily (Dauriz, Remy & Sandri, 2014). On the other hand, some brands have also redesigned their brick-and-mortar channel strategy to attract new customers after the pandemic and it has proved propitious for them (Phan & Heine, 2023). However, it has not been empirically substantiated



whether e-commerce will continue to increase or whether in-store shopping will be preferred in the post-COVID world. It is just conjectured that some consumers have become habituated to online shopping even after COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, while other reports suggest a reversion to in-store luxury shopping after long-term isolation and social distancing policies (Phan & Heine, 2023).

Hence, this study is aimed at empirically investigating consumer purchase intentions for different luxury behaviors and channels for post-pandemic consumption. Since consumer purchase intentions may differ due to cultural, ethnic, and gender differences (Hofstede, 1984; StokburgerSauer & Teichmann, 2013), the role of Hofstede's three cultural dimensions (Collectivism-Individualism, Power Distance, and Masculinity-Femininity), as well as ethnicity and gender (inclusive of non-binary genders) in influencing luxury preferences is also investigated.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Luxury Consumption and Its Different Patterns

Luxury products are status goods that attach prestige and power to the owner through their use, display, and brand value in addition to their functional utility (Grossman & Sharpiro, 1988; Husic & Cicic, 2009). Luxury consumption, considered a form of self-expression, affords great symbolic value as an extension of the consumer's personality and identity enhancement (Csikszentmihalyi & Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Richins, 1994; Sung, Choi, Ahn & Song, 2015). Due to varying purchase motivations, consumers may engage in different patterns of luxury consumption. These motivations are categorized as either extrinsic or intrinsic (Ki, Lee & Kim, 2017; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

When extrinsic factors are involved like wealth display or status signaling, consumers generally engage in conspicuous luxury consumption, grounded in materialism and "accumulation of goods" to impress others (Amatulli & Guido, 2011; Assimos, Pinto, Leite & Andrade, 2019; Bronner & de Hoog, 2019; Li, Guo, Zhang & Sun, 2019; O'cass & McEwen, 2004). With regards to COVID-19, it has been reported that consumers may engage in a new form of conspicuous consumption called "revenge luxury consumption", whereby, they attain compensation for and avenge the prolonged lockdown and restrictions through luxury hyperconsumerism, displaying wealth at social events and exhibiting a regain of their autonomy (Kim & Chang, 2023; Gupta & Mukherjee, 2022; Kantar, 2020; Echegaray, 2020).

Opposed to this revenge luxury consumption, consumers may also engage in "silent luxury" stemming from more intrinsic motivational factors (Ki & Kim, 2016). This constitutes mindful or sustainable consumption (Kapferer, 2010; Olšanová, Gook & Zlatić, 2018; Sheth, Sethia & Srinivas, 2011). It is a more conscientious mode of luxury behavior revolving around the pursuit of self-actualization, self-love, and intrinsic aspirations (Bendell & Kleanthous, 2007; Cvijanovich, 2011; Ki & Kim, 2016). Inclination to stay classic, and invest in timeless pieces with higher durability, craftsmanship, and quality are all elements of silent luxury (Cho, Gupta & Kim, 2015; Cvijanovich, 2011; Kapferer, 2010; Ki, Lee & Kim, 2017; McKinsey, 2020; Olšanová, Gook & Zlatić, 2018). Post-COVID-19, brand strategists

have been referring to it as "quiet luxury" with the term trending on social media as well (Nguyen, Nguyen & Nguyen, 2023).

Silent luxury consumers are more committed to leaving a lower ecological footprint, associating with environmentally friendly brands, and responsible consumption (Cervellon & Shammass, 2013; Jain, 2019).

Silent luxury consumption is also centered on cultivating meaningful relationships between consumers and their loved ones, communities, institutions, and ultimately themselves (Agapie & Sirbu, 2020; Seidman, 2007). According to a report by Statista, around 61% of luxury consumers have claimed that sustainability positively impacts their purchase intentions (Statista, 2020).

The Stimulus-Response Consumer Behavior Model and Luxury Purchase Intentions for Post-COVID Consumption

The Stimulus-Response Consumer Behavior Model theorizes that environmental stimuli like advertisements or macro-level conditions like technological change, economic shifts, global emergencies, or political paradigms, initiate some cognitive processes in consumers' brains, leading to observable responses (Gao & Bai, 2014; Jisana, 2014; Kotler, 1997; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Vieira, 2013). Such responses stem from consumers' characteristics which may be shaped by their experiences, ethnicity, and cultural values, as well as the decision-making process itself at the very moment and how it is shaped by the consumer's perception of the stimulus (Jisana, 2014; Kotler & Armstrong, 2010). The Stimulus-Response Model holds predictive power in terms of determining how consumers react to novel environmental stimuli (Laato, et al., 2020; Mehrabian & Russell, 1974; Vieira, 2013), in this case, COVID-19 as it has altered social, behavioral, and economic paradigms globally (Song, Yao & Wen, 2020).

With COVID-19 serving as a global crisis, lockdown restrictions and social distancing policies acted as a stimulus worldwide that would elicit a behavioral response. The model helps to illustrate shifts in luxury consumption styles and purchase intentions as a result of the aforementioned stimulus (Laato, et al., 2020; Xu, Benbasat & Cenfetelli, 2014). Luxury apparel consumption was reduced by over 20% and luxury jewelry by 25% globally just in 2020 (Statista, 2023). It is postulated that the economic crisis, severity of COVID-19, threat to life, and prolonged isolation served as environmental stimuli, causing shifts in luxury consumption patterns even in a post-COVID world (Brassett, et al., 2020; Laato, et al., 2020; Puschunder, 2020; Song, Yao & Wen, 2020). Such luxury and lifestyle shifts happened in Europe after the Black Plague as well. Once the Black Plague had ended, people engaged in conspicuous luxury consumption experiences after surviving the prolonged severity of the Plague, symbolizing their jolt back at a normal life (Keynes, 1936; Piper, 2020; Schmelzing, 2019; Veblen, 1899). It is expected that consumers may be inclined towards such revenge luxury consumption style after the pandemic, hyper-consuming and hoarding luxury products to "balance out" the lack of spending during COVID-19 (CNBC, 2020; Darshan &



Krishnegowda, 2020; McKinsey, 2020; Echegaray, 2020). Such consumption may take place as a self-rewarding and coping strategy owing to the overt stress and lockdown restrictions of COVID-19 (Kim & Chang, 2023). Consumption pattern changes were already being witnessed during the pandemic with patterns of revenge consumption emerging in China, owing to the pandemic stimuli discussed above (CNBC, 2020; Hall, Prayag, Fieger & Dyason, 2020; McKinsey, 2020).

Since pockets of revenge luxury consumption were already emerging in certain places in China, it can be posited that consumers in the US may also engage in the same, due to the perceived severity of COVID-19. It has been found that the higher the perceived severity of the COVID-19 stimulus, the greater the shift in consumption patterns (Laato, et al., 2020; Song, Yao & Wen, 2020). Hence, the following is hypothesized:

H1: Consumers with higher levels of Perceived Severity of COVID-19 exhibit higher purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption.

However, reports also suggest that consumers may engage in silent luxury consumption due to the loss of loved ones and COVID severity (Bain & Co., 2020; Kapecki, 2020; McKinsey, 2020). Silent luxury consumption exhibits the recalibration of lifestyles, prioritizing familial ties, focusing on ethicality, wisdom, and sustainability after a prolonged period of suffering (Kumar, 2023; Bain & Co., 2020; Echegaray, 2020; Jones & Comfort, 2020; Kapecki, 2020; Severo, De Guimarães & Dellarmelin, 2021). Thus, the following hypothesis is posed:

H2: Consumers with higher levels of Perceived Severity of COVID-19 exhibit higher purchase intentions for silent luxury consumption.

Luxury Purchase Channels

Even regarding purchase channels, it is expected that shifts in consumer preferences for post-pandemic luxury consumption will occur (Alaimo, Fiore & Galati, 2020; Laato, Islam, Farooq & Dhir, 2020; McKinsey, 2020).

Some reports suggest that most luxury shoppers may habituate to the online luxury experience even after COVID-19, particularly Gen Y members who are the most intense users of social media (Boulay, Faultrier, Feenstra & Muzellec, 2014; CNBC, 2020; Lissitsa & Kol, 2016; McKinsey, 2020). Around 10% of the total revenue of the luxury sector was generated online in 2020 since the onset of COVID-19, the highest ever in the last decade, to compensate for the shutting down of physical stores (Statista, 2020).

However, it has also been conjectured that a huge proportion of consumers jolt back to physical stores to satiate their much starved-for in-store experience after the pandemic as a response to the pandemic's restrictions on their freedom of movement (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Akhtar, et al., 2020). Also, in-store shopping generally secured a good 76% of purchases before COVID-19 due to greater consumer trust than online shopping (Boulay, et al., 2014; Brun, et al., 2013). It is also more instantaneously gratifying. However, no empirical evidence

exists to indicate luxury consumers' preferences for online or in-store purchase channels in the post-COVID world.

Hence a research question is raised:

RQ1: Are consumers more inclined towards in-store purchase channels over online ones for luxury consumption in a post-COVID world?

Ethnic Variations in Luxury Consumption and Ethnicity Theory

Ethnicity is defined as individuals' self-identification or affiliation with a group of people based on their cultural association, traditions, and social values (Bhanot, Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2014; Deshpande & Stayman, 1994; Mueller, 2008). Ethnicity Theory states that consumers belonging to an ethnic group process information and engage in product consumption similarly (Jackson, Chapa, Lee & Davis, 2019). This is also true for luxury consumption as consumers perceive and attach symbolic meaning to luxury products, based on their beliefs, traditions, heritage, and cultural values (Bhanot, Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2014; Kempen, 2007; Rossiter & Chan, 1998).

Studies have demonstrated that individuals display motivations and patterns of luxury consumption similar to members of their ethnicity but starkly different compared to members of other ethnic groups some, like Asian (Chinese and Korean), show "higher social anxiety and lower private self-consciousness than their American counterparts" (Bhanot, Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2014).

Some ethnicities have been reported to be more status-sensitive, engaging in conspicuous consumption and rejecting a luxury brand if it is more readily available to the masses (Bhanot, Srinivasan & Srivastava, 2014). Luuk van Kempen (2007) conducted a study in Bolivia and contends that some ethnic groups that face racial or ethnic discrimination may engage more in "socially visible consumption goods to make up for their low-status position in society". He calls this phenomenon "compensatory consumption" (Kempen, 2007).

Asian American consumers have been found to sport luxury brands to express social status to attain a desirable social belonging, whereas, their non-Hispanic White counterparts have been reported to invest in luxury brands for their unique style, timelessness, and hedonic purposes (Kim, Yi Luk, Xia, Xu & Yin, 2020; Lu & Pras, 2011; Williams, 2019; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998). With regards to Hispanic consumers, investment in luxury products has been greatly motivated by a drive to exhibit prestige and to look trendy and fashionable (Gardyn, 2002; Park & Reisinger, 2009). Even with different nationalities, preferences for luxury consumption vary. Australian consumers are more inclined towards mink furs and diamonds, while Turkish spend generously on souvenirs like carpets, pottery, and vintage luxury; in contrast, the German luxury market majorly caters to bright-colored and abstract crafts (Park & Reisinger, 2009; Phau & Prendergast, 2000; Thomson & Cutler, 1997; Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy & Fyall, 2007).

Studies have also reported that African American consumers in the US prefer conspicuous consumption compared



to their more individualistic non-Hispanic White counterparts (Koo & Im, 2019; Lamont & Molnár, 2001; Mazzocco, Rucker, Galinsky & Anderson, 2012). Hispanic Millennials are more brand-conscious than non-Hispanic White Millennials in the US (Johnson, Cho & Patwary, 2023). African Americans are also the most intense users of social media compared to other ethnicities in the US (Nielson, 2016). It may, thus, be conjectured that ethnic differences may arise about online vs. offline luxury shopping preferences. Overall, it is predicted that ethnic differences may affect consumer purchase choices for post-pandemic luxury consumption.

Consequently, the following research questions are raised:

RQ2: Do differences in consumers' purchase intentions for post-pandemic silent or revenge luxury consumption emerge across ethnicities?

RQ3: Do differences in consumer preferences for online or in-store luxury channels emerge across ethnicities?

Variations in Luxury Consumption and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory

Hofstede (2009; 2011) postulated a cultural dimensions framework for segmenting groups of people who behave differently and hold differing core values. The Cultural Dimensions Theory states that different cultures exhibit different patterns of collective behavior, which is true for consumption too (De Mooij & Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede, 2011; Hofstede, 1984; Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007). One salient cultural dimension is collectivism. It is centered on people being strongly knit, "interdependent within their in-groups" prioritizing in-group goals over their own, and behaving accordingly. Conversely, individualism is centered on people prioritizing their personal goals over their group's and being autonomous (Leung, 1997; Mills & Clark, 1982; Triandis, 2001).

Power distance is another cultural dimension centered on the acceptance of inequality in formal power in superior-subordinate relationships (Brockner, et al., 2001; Lee, Pillutla & Law, 2000). High power distance cultures exhibit increasing inequality than low power distance cultures (Hofstede, 1984).

Masculinity is yet another cultural dimension that involves the distribution of values and rigid roles between genders (Hofstede, 2009; Hofstede, 2011). Highly masculine societies are those where men's values are starkly distinctive from women's and they tend to be assertive and competitive, whereas in more feminine cultures, men tend to be relatively modest and caring, and gender roles are blurred (Hofstede, 1984; Hofstede, 2011).

Collectivistic cultures like China and Japan exhibit luxury consumption patterns of wealth display to impress in-groups and exude power as opposed to individualistic cultures which are more hedonistic in terms of luxury consumption (Wang, Sun & Song, 2010; Wong & Ahuvia, 1998; Yang, 1981). Chinese consumers are also greatly inclined towards foreign brand names and internationally renowned logos that members of their in-group will be familiar with (Wang, et al., 2010).

Individualistic people exhibit luxury patterns that are more grounded in the fulfillment of personal goals and pleasure-seeking (Aliyev & Wagner, 2018; Vigneron, 2006). In short, collectivistic people with high power distance engage more in conspicuous consumption that displays status to others as opposed to individualistic consumers with low power distance (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Kim & Zhang, 2011).

Consumers rating high on individualism and femininity tend to invest more in inconspicuous, silent luxury as an expression of their self-identity, and not to display wealth to others (Shao, Grace & Ross, 2019; Smith, 2007; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004). Such luxury consumption also revolves around the meaningful consumption of products with an ideological purpose, ethicality, and sustainability (Ali, Xiaoling, Ali, Sherwani & Muneeb, 2019; Husted, 2005; Park, Russell & Lee, 2007; Smith, 2007).

In terms of masculinity, Connell's Masculinity Theory also augments Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Theory, highlighting the consumption of status goods by men to maintain a hierarchical social position and autocracy over other genders (Connell, 2012; Schippers, 2007). Feminine cultures like Scandinavian countries have been reported to be more sustainability-oriented than their masculine counterparts (Aliyev & Wagner, 2018; Cui, Nelson & Yim, 2020; Isenhour & Ardenfors, 2009).

Even within the US, such cultural variations have been witnessed among different ethnicities as well as geographic regions. For instance, Hispanic consumers in the US are more collectivistic than non-Hispanic White counterparts and they have been reported to shop with family as opposed to other more individualistic ethnicities (Nielson, 2007; De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017). African American consumers are also more collectivistic than European Americans and their luxury consumption is driven by their need for status display (De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017). With regards to region, Southern US states like Florida, Georgia, and Texas are more short-term oriented compared to states like Idaho, North Dakota, and Montana which rate high on long-term orientation (Minkov & Kaasa, 2021). Consumers in the Deep South are more collectivistic while those in the Mountain West and Great Plains are strongly individualistic (Vandello & Cohen, 1999). Thus, luxury consumption patterns are touted to exhibit such cultural differences as well.

With the advent of COVID-19, consumers worldwide were exhibiting major shifts in their behaviors (Manthiou, 2020; PuaSchunder, 2020). Countries that rate high on Indulgence (Hofstede's cultural dimension) had higher rates of COVID-19 cases than countries rating high on Restraint (Voegel & Wachsmann, 2022). In addition, it has been reported that countries rated high on the Uncertainty Avoidance Index exhibited a lower proportion of people gathering in public or shopping in person (Huynh, 2020). Thus, it is hypothesized that Hofstede's cultural dimensions will also predict consumer choices for luxury consumption post-COVID as they have done so in the past (Soares, Farhangmehr & Shoham, 2007; Stathopoulou & Balabanis, 2019). For instance, it has been reported that the Polish are giving



more importance to sustainability and self-actualization for luxury purchases due to the effects of COVID-19 (Kossecki, Narożna, Steingartner, Płoneczka & Smektała, 2021). The following hypotheses are, henceforth, constructed:

H3: Consumers with higher levels of collectivism exhibit higher purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption in the post-COVID world.

H4: Consumers with higher levels of power distance exhibit higher purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption in a post-COVID world.

H5: Consumers with higher levels of masculinity exhibit higher purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption in a post-COVID world.

H6: Consumers with lower levels of collectivism exhibit higher purchase intentions for silent luxury consumption in a post-COVID world.

H7: Consumers with lower levels of power distance exhibit higher purchase intentions for silent luxury consumption in a post-COVID world.

H8: Consumers with lower levels of masculinity exhibit higher purchase intentions for silent luxury consumption in a post-COVID world.

Regarding purchase channels, extant literature only considers collectivism to be the salient cultural dimension to influence consumer preferences. It has been posited that collectivistic consumers enjoy social experiences associated with in-store shopping compared to the isolated nature of online shopping (Shavitt & Barnes, 2020; Smith, Rippé & Dubinsky, 2018). Thus, it is hypothesized that collectivistic luxury consumers also prefer socially driven, in-store experiences over the pandemic's online ones in a post-COVID world.

H9: Consumers with higher levels of collectivism exhibit higher preferences for in-store shopping over online shopping in a post-COVID world.

Gender Variations in Luxury Consumption, Gender Identity Theory and Queer Theory

Gender Identity Theory theorizes that personal selection, identification, and expression of one's gender status also involves distinct behavioral manifestations, roles, attitudes, and feelings for different genders (Money, 1985; Palan, 2001). Thus, different genders also exhibit varying shopping patterns, product choices, and consumption styles which are partly attributed to their perception of what is appropriate consumption behavior for males and females, owing to the Gender Schema Theory (Palan, 2001; Ramkissoon & Nunkoo, 2012; Schmitt, Leclerc & Dube-Rioux, 1988).

Luxury consumption patterns also differ for men, women, and non-binary genders. The Gender Identity Theory is corroborated here by Queer Theory to further concretize the theoretical foundations for gendered differences in luxury consumption behaviors post-COVID concerning non-binary genders.

Queer Theory "dramatizes incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual

desire", confirming that non-binary genders exhibit distinct consumption patterns that may stem from political and social agentic motives, compared to males and females (Jagose & Genschel, 1996; Sullivan, 2003). Thus, Queer Theory employed in unison with Gender Identity Theory, adeptly highlights the role that gender identity has on consumption shifts due to the pandemic (Huang & Wong, 2019; Patel, et al., 2020).

It has already been reported that females enjoy a greater inclination towards luxury products than their male counterparts for hedonic and self-presentation purposes, which is why luxury products for women are priced higher than those for men (Buss, 1989; Singh, 1993; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). Research has also been overwhelmingly conflicting in terms of luxury consumption styles when it comes to men and women (Segal & Podoshen, 2013). With regards to conspicuous consumption, some studies report that men exhibit higher tendencies (Browne & Kaldenberg, 1997; O'Cass, 2001; Segal & Podoshen, 2013; Tse, Belk & Zhou, 1989) while others report that women do (Gilman, 1999; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). This may be because, in earlier times and even today in masculine societies, women consume conspicuously to display and maintain the wealth and status of the man whose household they run, and luxury goods like apparel and beauty products are supremely powered by women customers (Douglas, 2000; Segal & Podoshen, 2013; Staveren & Odebo, 2007; Stokburger-Sauer & Teichmann, 2013). In terms of sustainable consumption, females have been found to attach more importance to self-transcendence values, being more concerned about social justice and environmental protection than males (Costa Pinto, Herter, Rossi & Borges, 2014; Diamantopoulos, Schlegelmilch, Sinkovics & Bohlen, 2003; Fukukawa, Shafer & Lee, 2007; Jain & Kaur, 2006).

With regards to non-binary genders and members of the lgbtq+ community, research and scholarship is extremely scant; however, the queer community has been reported to be positively inclined towards luxury consumerism, particularly travel (Huang & Wong, 2019). Historically, patterns of conspicuous consumption were witnessed among members of the queer community called "pink luxury" when non-binary genders were seeking upward social mobility and social justice (Murray, 1995; Rink, 2019). Even today, luxury consumption signifies retail therapy as well as seeking honor, identity expression, and social equality (Rink, 2019). Today, however, with sustainable consumption trends on the rise, non-binary genders exhibit mindful consumption patterns in sync with purposeful ideologies, environmental orientation, and ethicality because their values are more "gender-bending" and they are more prone to challenging the status quo notions of power in the realms of masculinity (Bloodhart & Swim, 2020; Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018; Sbicca, 2012; Simonsen, 2012). Luxury consumption studies on the gay community demonstrate that gay consumers' purchasing decisions reflect patterns of belongingness and social representation of the gay community (Dib & Johnson, 2019; Kates, 2002).

With COVID-19 threatening freedom of movement and consumption, some individuals were affected more than others,



and this is true for the queer community that has been greatly marginalized (Anderson & Knee, 2021; Patel, Cuneo, Power & Beyrer, 2020; Romero, Goldberg & Vasquez, 2020). The pandemic threatened their sense of belongingness since members of the LGBTQ+ community maintain in-group membership via social gatherings and shared leisure experiences (Anderson & Knee, 2021; Faderman, 2016; Krane, Barber & McClung, 2002). The pandemic also expectedly led to economic losses that were highly gendered in nature; with females and non-binary genders more than males, affecting their resources to engage in luxury consumption (Dang & Nguyen, 2020; McLaren, Wong, Nguyen & Mahamadachchi, 2020).

Henceforth, based on the literature review which exhibits that males are more inclined towards materialism and hyperconsumerism (Eastman, Goldsmith & Flynn, 1997; Kamineni, 2005) as well as the aforementioned theories, the following hypothesis is presented:

H10: Males have higher purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption than females in a post-COVID world.

Since non-binary genders have been reported to be more gender-bending and challenging the status quo with luxury consumption, and coupled with females, have been reported to exhibit greater care for the environment, the following hypothesis is posed:

H11: Non-binary genders and females have higher purchase intentions for silent luxury consumption than males in a post-COVID world.

In addition, literature also suggests that gender differences occur in terms of the inclination towards online or in-store purchase channels because consumers may derive shopping enjoyment and gratification from different sources, (Kotzé, North, Stols & Venter, 2012; Lin, Featherman, Brooks & Hajli, 2019). However, it is uncertain what trends have emerged with regard to COVID and concerning non-binary genders since no extant literature explores the field, thus, the following research question is asked:

RQ4: Do differences in consumer preferences for online or in-store luxury channels emerge across genders?

RESEARCH DESIGN

This study employed a quantitative online survey procedure to collect data using Qualtrics. A pilot test was run with over 50 participants to check face and content validity before its administration to actual participants. The survey included screening questions to filter out non-luxury consumers. They were “*Did you buy a luxury product worth \$200 or more in the last year?*” *price point based on Kapferer and Laurent (2016) and “*How often did you buy luxury products in the last two years?*”

Reading checks were incorporated into the survey and items were randomized to counterbalance and eliminate any confounding factors that might skew participant responses. The survey contained demographic questions at the end regarding gender, ethnicity, marital status, education, income, etc.

Sample Size and Characteristics

The study used convenience and snowball sampling techniques as they are more cost-effective, and the sample was controlled for ethnicity and gender. Participants were majorly recruited through the research participation system of a large southeastern university in the US. To increase non-binary gender participation, the survey was also posted on 17 independent, private Facebook groups for non-binary gender persons like “Transgender Expressions”, “Non-Binary Social Space”, “Non-Binary Gender Pride”, “NYC Non-Binary”, as well as on LGBTQ+ groups (these included “LGBTQ+ New Orleans Chapter” and “Texas Trans” on Whisper App).

Apart from the inclusion of all genders, the sample consisted of non-Hispanic whites, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans. The sampling frame was the US population aged 18 years and above and the minimum sample size required was 171, determined using G*Power Analysis for MANOVA with a power of 0.95. Out of the initial 439, a total of 262 responses were finally included after controlling for missing data and reading checks (responses that didn’t pass reading checks in the survey were excluded).

Gender composition of the final sample displayed a total of 50 males (19.1%), 189 females (72.1%) and 23 non-binary genders (8.8%). In terms of ethnicity, the sample comprised 157 non-Hispanic whites (59.9%), 47 Hispanic respondents (17.9%), 21 African Americans (8.1%), and 37 Asian Americans (14.1%).

Around 217 respondents (82.8%) were Gen Z members aged between 18-24 years, while 23 respondents (8.8%) lay within the 25-30 age bracket. 19 (7.3%) were Gen Y members (aged 31-40 years). Only 3 respondents (1.1%) lay within the 41-73 age group. A majority of the participants had attended at least some college or above, around 252 (96.2%) and 112 (42.7%) were employed part-time. The sample also predominantly comprised of unmarried participants, around 227 (86.6%).

Instrument Measures

All variables were operationalized via already established scales and validated through pilot testing. They involved a 7-point Likert Scale (1=Strongly Disagree; 7= Strongly Agree). The predictor variable, the Perceived Severity of COVID-19 was operationalized using the COVID-19 Perceived Severity measures adapted from Laato, Islam, Farooq, and Dhir (2020), and Song, Yao, and Wen (2020), based on items from Krieger and Sarge (2013). The COVID-19 Perceived Severity was a 6-item, 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree), with a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.89 and items like: “*The negative impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) is very high; COVID-19 (coronavirus) can be life-threatening; COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a serious threat for someone like me; COVID-19 (coronavirus) could be a very serious threat to my quality of life*”. A full description of the scale can be found in the supplemental materials document.

The criterion variable of Silent Luxury Purchase Intention (for post-pandemic consumption) was operationalized using Style Consumption Scale items adapted from Ki, Lee &



Kim (2017), Ki & Kim (2016), and Olšanová, Gook & Zlatic (2018). The final 4-item scale validated through exploratory factor analysis had a Cronbach’s alpha of 0.83 and items like: “Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product if it is a sustainable purchase; Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product because it is environmentally responsible; Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product because it is socially responsible at the same time as fulfilling its principal function”. A full description of the scale can be found in the supplemental materials document.

The criterion variable, Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention (for post-pandemic consumption) was operationalized using items from the Materialism Scale by Richins and Dawson (1992) like: “I will place much emphasis on the number of material objects I own as a sign of success once COVID-19 ends; Once COVID-19 ends, I will like to own things that impress people; Once COVID ends, I will admire people who still own expensive cars, homes and clothes; Once COVID-19 ends, I will pay a lot of attention to the material objects other people own”. Cronbach’s alpha was 0.85. A full description of the scale can be found in the supplemental materials document.

The variable of Consumer Intention to Choose Purchase Channel (for post-pandemic luxury consumption) was measured using a 7-point semantic differential scale (1 = shopping entirely by store, 7 = shopping entirely by Internet) for different luxury items (like luxury perfume, luxury apparel, luxury shoes). It was based on Shim, Eastlick & Lotz (2000) with the list of luxury items adapted from Husic and Cicic (2009), based on the Luxury Goods list by Dubois & Duquesne (1993).

The scale asked participants to rate in terms of willingness to use the purchase channel (either in-store or online) for shopping after COVID-19. Multiple luxury categories were

included to control for message-related variance and ensure that the inclination towards a certain purchase channel was due to COVID-19 and not due to a particular luxury item itself. For gendered luxury products like jewelry, it was mentioned in the survey that consumers may be buying for themselves or even someone else they may gift the luxury product to. The variables of Hofstede’s three cultural dimensions, vis a vis, Individualism-Collectivism, Power Distance, and Masculinity-Femininity, were operationalized using CVScale by Yoo, Donthu, and Lenartowicz (2011) with Cronbach’s alpha values of 0.88, 0.83 and 0.79, respectively. See the supplemental materials document for a full list of the scales. Measures for Ethnicity and Gender were operationalized using demographic questions, asking participants to select their ethnicity and gender from a list of options.

RESULTS

Linear regression was conducted to test H1 and H2. For both H1 and H2, *Perceived COVID Severity* was the predictor variable while the outcome variables were *Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention* and *Silent Luxury Purchase Intention*, respectively. For H1, results were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$) showing that *Perceived COVID Severity* does not predict purchase intentions to engage in revenge luxury consumption, $b = -0.032$, $SE = 0.061$, $p = 0.598$ as exhibited in Table 1. Thus, H1 was not supported. However, H2 was supported, showing that *Perceived COVID Severity* indeed predicted intentions to engage in silent luxury consumption in a post-COVID World, $b = 0.233$, $SE = 0.063$, $p < 0.001$ as exhibited in Table 2. This substantiates that as the perceived severity of COVID-19 increases, silent luxury purchase intentions also increase. Consumers are more inclined towards engaging in silent luxury and caring for planet Earth after the pandemic as they experienced a high severity of COVID-19.

Table 1. Linear Regression exhibiting if Perceived COVID Severity predicts Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Perceived COVID Severity	-0.032	0.061	-0.152	0.088	0.598

Dependent Variable: Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention

Table 2. Linear Regression exhibiting if Perceived COVID Severity predicts Silent Luxury Purchase Intention

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Perceived COVID Severity	0.233	0.063	0.108	0.358	0.001*

Dependent Variable: Silent Luxury Purchase Intention

* $p < 0.001$

For RQ1, a paired sample t-test (Table 3) was run that yielded statistically significant results ($p < 0.001$) in terms of consumer preference for in-store or online luxury purchase channels. Respondents exhibited a higher inclination towards *Purchase Intentions for In-Store Luxury Channels*, $M = 4.32$, $SD = 1.60$, as opposed

to *Purchase Intentions for Online Luxury Channels*, $M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.63$, $t_{0.05} (261) = 7.919$, $p < 0.001$. This implies that consumers wish to purchase luxury products in person in a post-COVID world and enjoy instant gratification rather than go online for luxury experiences.

Table 3. Paired Samples T-Test (Luxury Purchase Channels)

Variable	High		Low		t	df	p	MD
	M	SD	M	SD				
Purchase Intentions for Luxury Channels (In-Store-Online)	4.32	1.60	3.78	1.63	7.919	261	0.001*	0.540

* $p < 0.05$



To test H3, H4, and H5, linear regression was conducted with *Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention* as the outcome variable while *Collectivism*, *Power Distance*, and *Masculinity* served as predictor variables. Results for H3 display that *Collectivism* does not predict *Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention* ($p > 0.05$), as $b = -0.076$, $SE=0.060$, $p = 0.205$. So H3 was not supported. However, both *Power Distance* and *Masculinity* predict *Revenge Luxury*

Purchase Intention, as $b= 0.414$, $SE = 0.078$, $p < 0.001$ for *Power Distance* and $b=0.288$, $SE=0.064$, $p < 0.001$ for *Masculinity*. Both H4 and H5 were supported. This means that consumers who rate high on power distance and masculinity exhibit higher purchase intentions to engage in revenge luxury consumption in a post-COVID world. See Table 4.

Table 4. Linear Regression exhibiting if Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions predict Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Collectivism	-0.076	0.060	-0.194	0.042	0.205
Power Distance	0.414	0.078	0.260	0.568	0.001*
Masculinity	0.228	0.064	0.103	0.354	0.001*

Dependent Variable: Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention

* $p < 0.001$

For H6, H7, and H8, the linear regression test displays statistically significant results ($p < 0.05$) with regards to *Silent Luxury Purchase Intention* for consumers rating low on *Power Distance* ($b = -0.220$, $SE = 0.087$, $p = 0.012$) and *Masculinity* ($b = -0.179$, $SE = 0.069$, $p = 0.010$). See Table 5. This means that individuals with high femininity and low power distance are

more inclined towards silent/sustainable luxury consumption in a post-COVID world. H7 and H8 were supported!

However, for H6, *Collectivism* does not predict *Silent Luxury Purchase Intention* with statistical significance ($b = 0.074$, $SE = 0.064$, $p = 0.245$) as exhibited in Table 5. So H6 was not supported.

Table 5. Linear Regression exhibiting if Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions predict Silent Luxury Purchase Intention

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Collectivism	0.074	0.064	-0.051	0.200	0.245
Power Distance	-0.220	0.087	-0.391	-0.049	0.012*
Masculinity	-0.179	0.069	-0.314	-0.044	0.010*

Dependent Variable: Silent Luxury Purchase Intention

* $p < 0.05$

For H9, another linear regression was conducted to assess if *Collectivism* predicts consumers’ *Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels*. Results were statistically significant ($b = 0.161$, $SE = 0.080$, $p = 0.045$) with a p-value less than 0.05

for a 95% confidence level. Thus, H9 was supported. This shows that collectivistic luxury consumers are more inclined towards in-person social shopping experiences than online ones. See Table 6.

Table 6. Linear Regression exhibiting if Hofstede’s Cultural Dimension-Collectivism predicts Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels

Predictor	Estimate	SE	95% CI		p
			LL	UL	
Collectivism	0.161	0.080	0.004	0.318	0.045*

Dependent Variable: Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels

* $p < 0.05$

For RQ2 and RQ3, a Multivariate MANOVA was run with *Ethnicity* as the fixed factor. Outcome variables were: *Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention*, *Silent Luxury Purchase Intention*, *Purchase Intention for In-Store Luxury Channels*, and *Purchase Intention for Online Luxury Channels*. Results largely exhibited statistical non-significance for ethnic differences in terms of *Revenge* [$F(3, 258) = 0.198$, $p=0.897$] or *Silent Luxury Purchase Intentions* [$F(3, 258) = 0.804$, $p = 0.493$] among consumers. See Table 7. Thus, the answer to RQ2 is that no luxury style differences occur in purchase intentions about post-pandemic consumption based on ethnicity. However, some findings did emerge in Pairwise Comparisons about RQ4. With

regards to *Purchase Intentions for In-Store Luxury Channels*, African American consumers exhibited higher purchase intentions ($M = 4.38$, $SE = 0.273$) than both their Non-Hispanic White ($M = 3.66$, $SE = 0.127$, $p = 0.012$) and Asian American counterparts ($M = 3.67$, $SE = 0.266$, $p = 0.040$). This indicates that African Americans are more inclined to engage in in-store luxury shopping after the pandemic. This corroborates with extant research that highlights them as the most collectivistic ethnicity (De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017). See Figure 1 for a graphical illustration of African Americans’ preference for in-store channels compared to other ethnicities. It must be noted here that when testing interaction effects between ethnicity and



gender in MANOVA, it was found that results were statistically significant for *Silent Luxury Purchase Intention*, $F(6, 255) = 3.795, p < 0.001$. Multiple Comparison results showed that African American male consumers had significantly lower purchase intentions for silent luxury ($M = 1.50, SE = 1.019$) compared to non-Hispanic White counterparts ($M = 4.32, SE = 0.322$) for post-pandemic consumption. Similarly, non-binary Hispanic consumers also exhibited significantly lower purchase intentions for silent luxury ($M = 2.53, SE = 0.832$) compared to non-Hispanic White ($M = 5.09, SE = 0.435$) or Asian American ($M = 5.20, SE = 0.645$) non-binary luxury consumers.

Interaction effects between ethnicity and gender were also statistically significant for *Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels*, $F(6,255)=2.486, p=0.024$. Multiple Comparison results exhibited that Hispanic males ($M = 4.59, SE = 0.437$) were more inclined towards in-store luxury channels than non-Hispanic White counterparts ($M = .66, SE = 0.339$). However, non-binary Hispanic consumers ($M = 3.27, SE = 0.875$) had a significantly low inclination towards in-store luxury channels compared to non-binary African American consumers ($M = 6.20, SE = 0.757$) with p -value = 0.032, the latter exhibiting the highest inclination for in-store luxury channels compared to all other ethnicities across the gender spectrum.

Table 7. MANOVA Testing Differences across Ethnicities

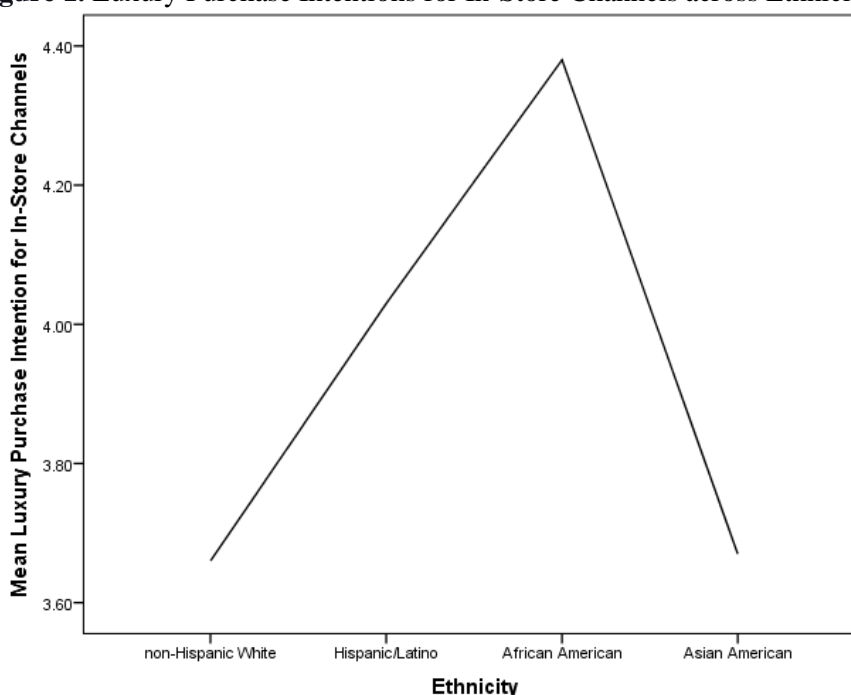
Intercept	Mean Sq.	F (3, 258)	p	Partial Eta Sq.
Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention	0.307	0.198	0.897	0.002
Silent Luxury Purchase Intention	1.576	0.804	0.493	0.008
Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels	3.561	1.299	0.275	0.013
Luxury Purchase Intention for Online Channels	5.954	2.217	0.086	0.023

Pairwise Comparisons

Variable	Ethnicity	Levels	MD	p
Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels	African American	Non-Hispanic White	0.721	0.012*
		Asian American	0.709	0.040*

* $p < 0.05$

Figure 1. Luxury Purchase Intentions for In-Store Channels across Ethnicities



For H10 and H11, a MANOVA with Pairwise Comparisons and Post-Hoc Bonferroni was conducted. Results show that females exhibited lower *Revenge Luxury Purchase Intentions* compared to both males ($MD = -0.532, SE = 0.189, p = 0.005$) and non-binary genders ($MD = -0.522, SE = 0.215, p = 0.016$), with statistical significance. With regards to *Silent*

Luxury Purchase Intentions, non-binary genders exhibited significantly higher purchase intentions than both males ($MD = 1.065, SE = 0.290, p < 0.001$) and females ($MD = 1.044, SE = 0.240, p < 0.001$). See Table 8 as well as Figures 2 and 3. Thus, both H10 and H11 were supported, highlighting that males exhibit higher revenge luxury purchase intentions than females.



Results also showed that non-binary genders and females both males but the difference between males and females was not exhibited higher silent luxury purchase intentions compared to statistically significant.

Table 8. MANOVA for Luxury Purchase Intention Differences across Genders

Intercept	Mean Sq.	F (3, 259)	p	Partial Eta Sq.
Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention	8.664	5.845	0.003*	0.039
Silent Luxury Purchase Intention	18.163	9.866	0.001*	0.064
Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels	27.827	10.789	0.001*	0.070
Luxury Purchase Intention for Online Channels	21.834	8.380	0.001*	0.055

*p < 0.05

Post-Hoc Bonferroni

Variable	Gender	Levels	MD	p
Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention	Female	Male	-0.522	0.005*
		Non-Binary	-0.532	0.016*
Silent Luxury Purchase Intention	Non-Binary	Male	1.065	0.001*
		Female	1.044	0.001*
Luxury Purchase Intention for In-Store Channels	Male	Female	-0.935	0.001*
		Non-Binary	-1.512	0.001*
		Female	-0.576	0.043*
Luxury Purchase Intention for Online Channels	Male	Female	-0.928	0.001*
		Non-Binary	-1.232	0.001*

*p < 0.05

Figure 2. Revenge Luxury Purchase Intentions across Genders

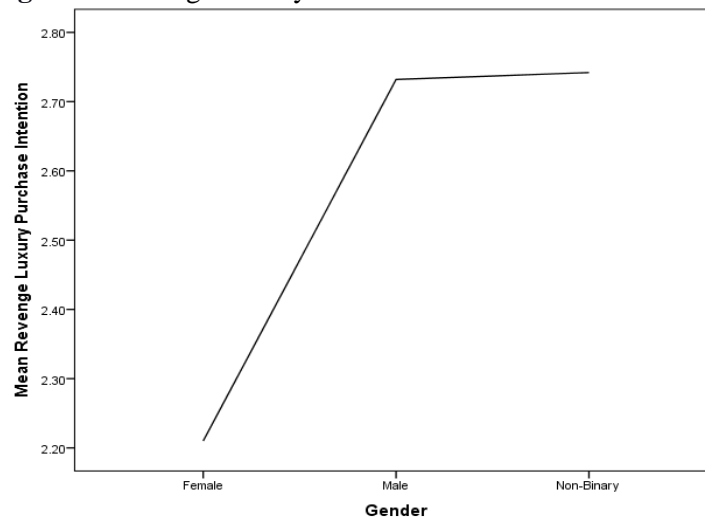
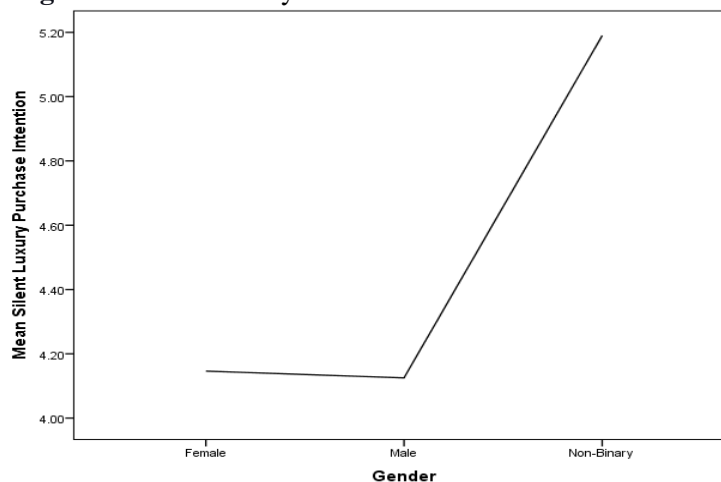


Figure 3. Silent Luxury Purchase Intention Across Genders





For RQ4, about luxury purchase channels, non-binary gender consumers exhibited higher *Purchase Intentions for In-Store Luxury Channels* when compared to both male (MD = 1.512, SE = 0.343, $p=0.001$) and female consumers (MD = 0.576, SE= 0.284, $p=0.043$). Females also exhibited significantly higher purchase intentions for in-store luxury channels when compared to their male counterparts (MD = 0.935, SE = 0.250, p

= 0.001). See Table 8 as well as Figure 4. It is interesting to note that even in terms of *Purchase Intentions for online Luxury Channels*, males exhibit lower purchase intentions than both females (MD = -0.928, SE =0.251, $p = 0.001$) and non-binary gender luxury consumers (MD = -1.232, SE =0.344, $p = 0.001$). See Figure 5.

Figure 4. Luxury Purchase Intentions for In-Store Channels across Genders

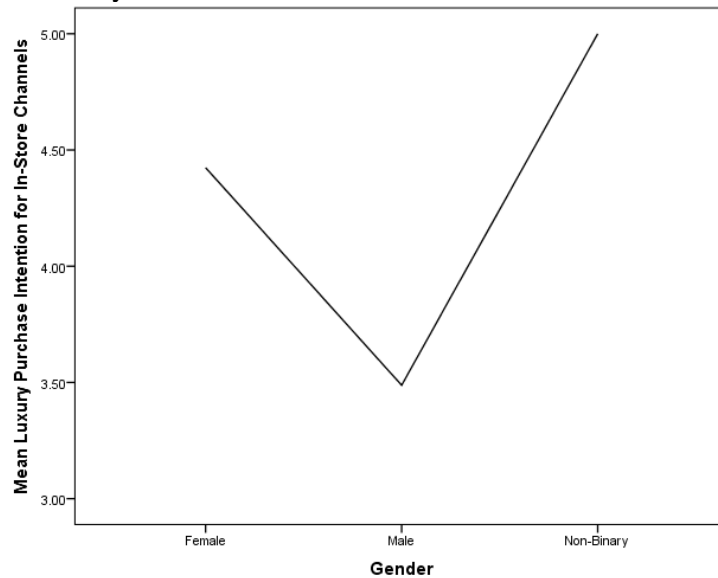
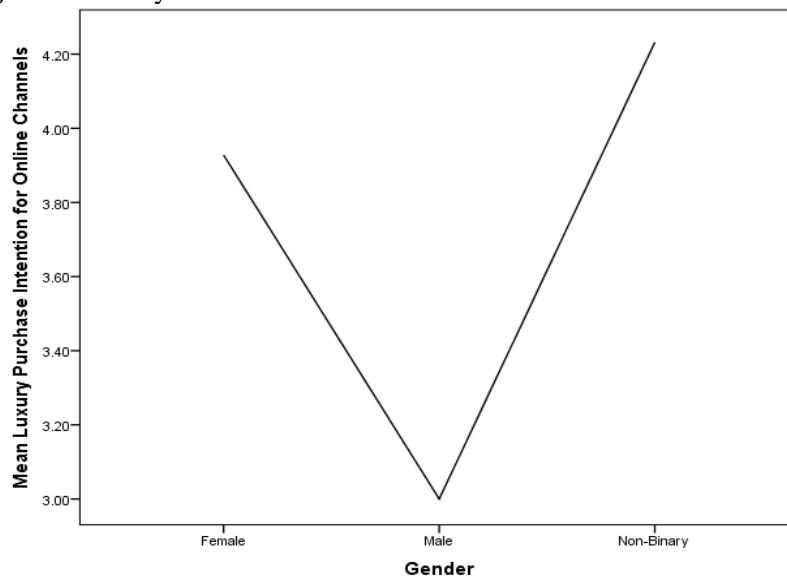


Figure 5. Luxury Purchase Intentions for Online Channels across Genders



DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study adds to the scant literature that exists on COVID-19 and its corporate repercussions. It provides evidence-backed insights about luxury purchase intentions across different genders and ethnicities in the highly unpredictable economic and social landscape that prevails today in a post-COVID world. The study also takes into account the *Perceived COVID Severity* of individuals, as well as their preferences regarding different luxury purchase channels. Regarding those experiencing a high degree of *Perceived COVID Severity*, this study reinforces the

postulation that owing to the prolonged period of suffering, consumers are more inclined towards silent luxury consumption, caring more for sustainability, subtle luxury, and craftsmanship than conspicuousness. (Kumar, 2023; Bain & Co., 2020; Echegaray, 2020; Kapecki, 2020; McKinsey, 2020).

Results also show that consumers exhibit a strong inclination towards in-store luxury channels after the pandemic. This most likely is a result of the prolonged quarantine and serves as an overcompensation for the lack of in-store shopping during COVID-19 (Akhtar, Nadeem Akhtar, Usman, Ali & Iqbal Siddiqi,



2020). Therefore, it is strategically beneficial for companies to focus on aestheticizing their stores, work on innovative ways to provide a richer in-store experience, and try to expand sustainable luxury products that glorify quality craftsmanship, heritage symbolism, and niche artisanship.

Regarding niche segments and cultural variations among consumer segments, the study reports that highly masculine and high power distance cultures exhibit greater purchase intentions for revenge luxury consumption styles. This is in tandem with previous academic literature and corporate reports that established that consumers from such cultures are more inclined towards brand-oriented luxury materialism (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Kim & Zhang, 2011) due to their proclivity to exhibit status and wealth through luxury consumption. Findings also suggest that they may offset the prolonged luxury drought during COVID-19 by engaging in luxury hyper-consumerism. This behavior may predominantly stem from their inherent penchant to maintain the existent power distance in their social setting and position themselves at the higher end of the power dynamic (Eng & Bogaert, 2010; Shao, Grace & Ross, 2019; Wang, Sun & Song, 2010). The study also highlights that luxury consumers rating low on power distance and high on femininity are more inclined towards silent or sustainable luxury consumption, a finding that aligns with extant literature on the positive association between femininity, low power distance, and sustainable or conscious consumption (Cui, Nelson & Yim, 2020; Aliyev & Wagner, 2018; Smith, 2007; Sullivan & Gershuny, 2004).

Regarding the different gender market segments involved, it is found that females are more inclined towards silent, sustainable consumption compared to male luxury consumers. This corroborates the postulations by previous studies that female luxury consumers are primarily communal, and their consumption is more centered towards nurturing and caring for Mother Earth (Eagly, 1987; Meyers-Levy, 1988; Prakash, 1992; Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992).

This study also reports that non-binary genders are even more inclined towards silent luxury than females or males. This could be due to these individuals being quite marginalized in society in consumption activities that create a sense of belongingness, ethicality, and self-actualization important to them (Bloodhart & Swim, 2020; Greenebaum & Dexter, 2018; Sbicca, 2012; Simonsen, 2012). Men are more inclined towards conspicuous revenge luxury consumption and African American men more so than their non-Hispanic White counterparts. This has great corporate implications for luxury brands. For example, gender-specific luxury products may need to involve nice brand strategies such that male-specific luxury products incorporate emblazoned brand logos and have brand entity emphasized, whereas female and non-binary luxury apparel ought to focus more on quality craftsmanship, subtlety, and sustainability efforts.

This research also found non-binary genders to be most inclined towards in-store shopping experiences after the pandemic, again corroborating results from previous studies that highlight their great tendency for engaging in activities that

create a sense of belongingness, social inclusiveness and visibility (Dib & Johnson, 2019; Kates, 2002; Rink, 2019). Using this insight, brands could introduce a post-pandemic PR strategy centered on the in-store experience like a luxury product line launch party, meet-and-greets, or in-store shopping soirees.

Collectivistic luxury consumers have also been reported to prefer in-store channels that allow for a greater in-person, social experience and communal satiation, as previous literature highlights (Shavitt & Barnes, 2020; Smith, Rippé & Dubinsky, 2018). In addition, African American consumers who are known to be more collectivistic than other ethnic counterparts have also been reported to prefer in-store shopping experiences after the pandemic (De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017). Hispanic males who are also collectivistic prefer in-store shopping experiences compared to non-Hispanic White male luxury consumers (Nielson, 2007; De Mooij & Beniflah, 2017). Black and Hispanic male luxury brands should, therefore, focus on improved merchandising and visual appeal in retail outlets and opt for in-person events, store-specific loyalty cards, and other strategies to increase store visits from these ethnic consumer segments. Since these ethnic groups exhibit a highly masculine culture with great power distance dynamics, a greater focus on revenge luxury consumption and conspicuousness tactics must be placed too.

On the other hand, digital experiences like app-supported or website-supported commerce must be improved for non-Hispanic White luxury consumers who are more individualistic and are more easily encouraged to engage in e-shopping compared to African American or Hispanic counterparts.

In all, by using insights and recommendations that this study provides regarding various target markets, brand strategists and marketing managers can empower corporate stakeholders to alter product positioning strategies and increase profits for their brands by capitalizing on niche target market segments in the luxury industry in a post-COVID world.

LIMITATIONS

The limitations of this study include possible lower internal validity as a survey methodology was employed and confounding variables may be present. An experiment, on the other hand, would be able to assess direct cause-and-effect relationships between variables. Also, since convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used, the final sample wasn't a truly representative one. Participation was skewed towards female students and the non-Hispanic White ethnicity; there was also limited participation from the Trans community. It must also be noted that since the participants were majorly from Florida, the phases of lockdown restrictions and their severity may not be representative of those imposed in other regions. For future studies, a qualitative approach could be adopted as well to investigate underlying psychological motivations associated with various styles of luxury consumption. Research could be broadened by considering the variations across different ages and income, delving into other Hofstede's cultural dimensions, doing a comparative analysis by studying European/Chinese markets, as well as looking at the impact of other factors like influencers and



post-COVID fashion trends on revenge and silent luxury inclinations.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had enormous social, political, and economic implications. This research examined its impact on consumer buying attitudes, particularly towards luxury goods. It investigated how different cultural dimensions influence consumer luxury preferences across different ethnicities and genders. The study serves to be the first of its kind to explore the luxury purchase intentions of non-binary genders concerning

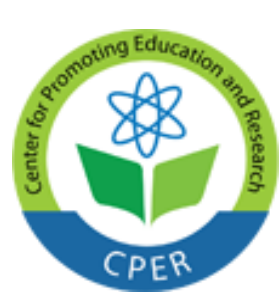
COVID-19. General and niche luxury brands must keep such facets in mind so that they can cater to untapped market segments that have been emerging as the US becomes increasingly multicultural. The insights (e.g., regarding channel marketing strategies) combined with this paper's predictive and analytic power are vital in helping luxury stakeholders and marketers make better research-backed decisions for their products and thus, cater better to the various fragmented niche target market segments.

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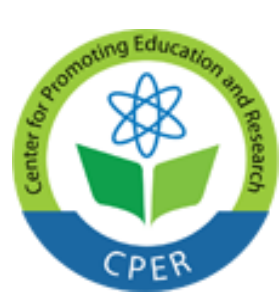


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SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

MEASURES FOR THE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

(Note: All the scales are 7-point Likert with 1 = Strongly Disagree and 7 = Strongly Agree. Items to be reverse-coded are flagged with an *)

COVID-19 Perceived Severity

1. The negative impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) is very high.
2. COVID-19 (coronavirus) can be life-threatening.
3. COVID-19 (coronavirus) is a serious threat for someone like me.
4. COVID-19 (coronavirus) could be very harmful to my wellbeing.
5. COVID-19 (coronavirus) could put my health at risk.
6. COVID-19 (coronavirus) could be a very serious threat to my quality of life.

Materialism Scale (Revenge Luxury Purchase Intention)

1. Once COVID-19 ends, I will admire people who still own expensive cars, homes and clothes.
2. Once COVID-19 ends, some of the most important achievements in life will include acquiring material possessions.
3. I will place much emphasis on the amount of material objects I own as a sign of success once COVID-19 ends.
4. Once COVID-19 ends, the things I own will say a lot about how well I'm doing in life.
5. Once COVID-19 ends, I will like to own things that impress people.
6. Once COVID-19 ends, I will pay a lot of attention to the material objects other people own.
7. Once COVID ends, the things I will own won't be all that important to me.*
8. Once COVID-19 ends, I will try to keep my life simple, as far as possessions are concerned.*
9. Once COVID-19 ends, I will usually buy only the things I need.*
10. Once COVID ends, I will be buying things because it gives me a lot of pleasure.
11. I will like a lot of luxury in my life once COVID-19 ends.
12. Once COVID ends, I will be happier if I own nicer things.
13. Once COVID ends, I am willing to spend money on a lot of things that are not practical.
14. Once COVID-19 ends, I am willing to put less emphasis on material things than most people I know.*
15. Once COVID-19 ends, I will already have all the things I need to enjoy life.*
16. Once COVID-19 ends, my life would be better if I own certain things I do not have.
17. Once COVID-19 ends, I would be happier if I could afford to buy more things.
18. Once COVID-19 ends, it'll sometimes bother me quite a bit that I won't be able to afford to buy all the things I'd like.

Silent (Mindful or Style) Luxury Purchase Intention

1. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product to emphasize my own style.
2. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product to reflect my personal taste and interests.
3. Once COVID ends, I will buy a luxury brand because it suits my personality.
4. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury brand for its timeless style.
5. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product for its long-lasting quality.
6. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product to use it for long.
7. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product if it is a sustainable purchase.
8. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product because it is environmentally responsible.
9. Once COVID-19 ends, I will buy a luxury product because it is socially responsible at the same time as fulfilling its principal function.

Intention to Use Purchase Channel for Luxury Consumption

Semantic Differential Scale for Online versus In-store Purchasing: For the following luxury products, rate the scale in terms of your likelihood to use the Purchase Channel (either store or internet/online) for shopping **after COVID-19**. 1 = Very Unlikely; 7 = Very Likely. You may be shopping for yourself or someone else to gift the luxury product to.

How likely will you purchase the following luxury products in-store after COVID-19?

How likely will you purchase the following luxury products online after COVID-19?



1. Luxury Perfume
2. Luxury Bottle of Champagne
3. Luxury Pen
4. Luxury Watch
5. Diamond Jewelry
6. Luxury Apparel
7. Luxury Bag/Purse/Wallet
8. Luxury Shoes
9. Expensive Painting or Luxury Art

CVScale (Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions)

Collectivism

1. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.
2. Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.
3. Individuals should stick with the groups even through difficulties.
4. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.
5. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.
6. Group success is more important than individual success.

Power Distance

1. People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.
2. People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.
3. People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.
4. People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.
5. People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions.

Masculinity

1. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women.
2. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.
3. Solving organizational problems usually requires an active forcible approach which is typical of men.
4. There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman.

consent form

INFORMED CONSENT

Welcome to the study centered on **Consumer Behavior Post COVID-19**.

You are invited to take part in this research study because you are 18 years or older and a US resident. This study is about consumer shopping habits that might occur in a post-COVID world. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief online questionnaire (duration approximately 10-15 minutes).

The purpose of the study is to better understand the role of COVID-19 in determining consumer decisions and shopping habits once the pandemic ends.

Participation in the study is **completely voluntary** and whether you decide to participate is your personal choice. If you decide to later change your mind, your decision will not be held against you.

There are NO foreseeable risks for participating in the study. The only potential risk of participating in this study may be emotional distress in response to questions that mention COVID-19. This distress response may be more likely for participants who've had great emotional distress or loss of a loved one during COVID-19. However, there is no physical risk associated with taking this questionnaire.

Within the survey, there will also be demographic questions, but your responses will remain completely **anonymous** and password-protected. You do NOT need to come to a physical lab; you can complete the survey on your laptop or mobile device.

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, you may talk to the research team at tk18bf@my.fsu.edu



This research has been reviewed and approved by an Institutional Review Board (“IRB”). You may contact them at humansubjects@fsu.edu

I've read the above and agree that I am 18 years or older, and consent to take part in the study:

- Agree
- Disagree