IDENTIFYING DIMENSIONS OF LUXURY SHOPPING EXPERIENCE (LSE):
A SOCIO-SEMIOTICS APPROACH

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3rd Monaco Symposium on Luxury, Monaco, April 2018
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Abstract

Experience is at the heart of luxury and luxury shopping. As far as we know no research has highlighted the dimensions of shopping experience in this specific sector. Previous research has identified dimensions of shopping experience regarding mass market context but one can be asked if these are still relevant in the luxury context.

Thus, this research aims at identifying the specific dimensions of Luxury Shopping Experience (LSE). In order to reach this purpose, a qualitative methodology has been set up. 18 semi-directive interviews of luxury consumers have been conducted. A thematic categorical analysis has been realized. This has led to the identification of 3 dimensions (Synesthesia, Epicurean and Social Exception) and 6 sub-dimensions (aesthetics and the dramatization; relation / emotion and temporality; welcome and enhancement). Finally, a semiotic analysis based on the semiotic square (“luxury for oneself – luxury for others”) has allowed to highlight the dimensions and sub-dimensions that are dominant for each type of luxury consumers. The results of this research bring about a better understanding of the shopping experience in the luxury context with both theoretical and managerial contributions regarding luxury brands.

Keywords: Luxury, Semiotics, Shopping Experience, Consumers
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1. Introduction

Experiential marketing was initiated by the research of Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) as part of their work on the experience economy. Pine and Gilmore (1999) explained that ‘when a person buys a service, he purchases a set of intangible activities carried out on his behalf. But when he buys an experience, he pays to spend time enjoying a series of memorable events that a company stages to engage him in a personal way’. Experiential marketing is therefore about taking the essence of a product and amplifying it into a set of tangible, physical and interactive experiences that reinforce the offer. Consumption is no longer understood in a purely utilitarian way, but in an emotional perspective, where managers have to rethink their offerings as experience containers (Hetzel, 2002). The nature of consumption experience is established as an interaction between a person and an object in a given situation (a place and a period of time) (Arnauld and Thomson, 2005).

The consumer experience is not confined to the act of consumption. The act of purchase is a fundamental step in creating pleasure. Defined under the term of shopping experience, the concept refers to consumption experiences that occur in sale places (shops, shopping centers) or places designed in order to deliver services pertaining exclusively to the commercial sphere (Roederer, 2012). The shopping experience has been the topic of marketing research in order to understand its dimensions (Verhoef and al, 2009; Spena and al, 2012). The sensory, emotional and social components emerge as being particularly linked to the concept of shopping experience. These dimensions have been highlighted especially for the mass market
sector. But what about the luxury sector? What are the dimensions of the luxury shopping experience? Given the specificities of the sector, are the dimensions of the concept identical in luxury to those identified in other sectors?

Despite experience is an important matter in the luxury sector (Keller, 2009; Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; De Barnier and al, 2012), no research, as far as we know, has focused on in-depth study of the luxury shopping experience. The experience is discussed in many articles on luxury but without being conceptualized. Therefore, the objective of this research is to identify the dimensions of the luxury shopping experience according to the luxury consumers’ perceptions and expectations.

In this context, a review of the literature focusing firstly on shopping experience in general and secondly on the importance of experience in the luxury sector is conducted. This allows to highlight the dimensions already identified in the mass market and the most important components in the luxury sector. In a second step, a qualitative study using interviews and a semiotic analysis grid is conducted on luxury consumers in order to highlight the dimensions of the Luxury Shopping Experience (LSE) and to define what are the most important dimensions according to the profiles of luxury consumers. Finally, the results of the research are presented and discussed.

2. Theoretical background

2.1. Consumption experience and its dimensions

The experience of consumers can be divided into several stages: the before experience, the heart of the experience and the after experience (Roederer, 2008). The experience can also be
defined as an "experiential consumption generation process" that is composed by four steps (Arnould and al., 2002): the experience of anticipation, the shopping experience (product selection, payment, meet with the service, atmosphere, etc.), the experience itself (sensation, satisfaction, flow processing) and the memory of experience (memories, re-memorizing, images, etc.).

Research on consumption experience has highlighted several dimensions (Michaud and al., 2014):

- A psychological dimension: that corresponds to emotions, cognitive and affective aspects (Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Verhoef and al., 2009),
- A physical and sensorial dimension: that refers to tangible base of experience; multi-sensory (Heilbrunn, 2010),
- A symbolic dimension: that promotes values and an imaginary world (Holbrook, 2000), personalization and identification,
- A pragmatic dimension: that focuses on many practices, consumer as a co-production of the experience (practical act of doing something and usability) and
- A social and relational dimension: that includes interpersonal dimensions (Holt, 1995; Gentile and al. 2007).

These dimensions relate overall to the consumption experience. But what about shopping experience in a store?

2.1. Shopping experience and its dimensions

The heart of the retail experience corresponds to the result of the interaction "person - object" and can be materialized as the shopping experience, the result of the interaction seller-consumer environment (Roederer, 2008). Managing the point of sales with a simple
functional orientation is no longer possible. It requires an orientation more focused on intangible and hedonic value (Filser, 2001).

The shopping experience has also been the subject of several studies since the late 1990s, highlighting mainly the sensory, emotional and social dimensions (Verhoef and al, 2009; Spena and al, 2012.).

- The sensory component has particularly a great importance in the shopping experience (Babin and Attaway 2000). It provides, among others, pleasure and value to consumers (Holbrook, 2006).

- The emotions associated with the shopping experience are also highlighted (Machleit and Eroglu, 2000; Arnold and al., 2005; Andreu and al., 2006). The shopping experience can contribute to hedonistic or utilitarian values. In addition, the shopping experience can have a symbolic meaning (Arnould and Price, 1993).

- The shopping experience also has a very strong social dimension, through the sharing of experience with an accompanying person (Borges and al., 2010), through the level of identification with other consumers in stores (Chebat and al., 2006) or through the links established with sales advisors (Price and al., 1995).

2.4. Luxury Shopping Experience (LSE)

The specificities of luxury

Nowadays luxury can be defined as a way of being, a way of life but also a way to buy, consume and use, rather than a knowhow or a way to do something (Roux and Floch, 1996; Nyeck, 2004). Luxury is therefore plural and addresses several aspects, primarily related to personal values and interpersonal values. While traditional luxury (interpersonal luxury or luxury for others) includes values such as superfluousness, know-how, and the desire to make
a certain impression, emotional luxury (personal luxury or luxury for oneself) emphasises values of personal pleasure, feelings (Lipovetsky and Roux, 2003). To provide pleasure and to live the extraordinary, luxury and luxury brands convey narratives and tell stories (Nyeck, 2004). They have to be the vector of uniqueness, rarity and selectivity values. Through their cultural and geographical roots but also their ontological function, luxury brands have to recreate the gap and to maintain their inaccessible image (Keller, 2009). Defined by both the intrinsic quality of products and the intangible components, luxury brands are sensorial and emotional containers. Hagtvedt and Patrick (2009) define the luxury brand as one that offers premium products, gives pleasure as a key benefit and links with consumers emotionally strong.

**Luxury experience and Luxury Shopping Experience**

Experience plays a fundamental part in the luxury sector. According to Keller (2009), luxury brands have ten characteristics among which we find the premium image, the quality of products and services, the pleasure shopping and the buying experience. Hedonism and emotion are particularly important dimensions of luxury for consumers (Hagtvedt and Patrick, 2009; De Barnier et al., 2012) and especially from the 2000s where luxury has evolved towards a vision less centred on others, but more on individualization, affect, sensitivity and emotions, referring to an emotional luxury, experiential (Lipovetsky and Roux, 2003; Batat, 2017). All the marketing aspects should ensure a pleasant shopping experience for consumers (Keller, 2009). Together with product design and marketing communication, retail management is a core competency area for luxury firms (Kim and al, 2016). Since luxury brands provide hedonic rewards and sensory fulfilment through high-quality products and services (Vigneron and Johnson, 2004) and help consumers accomplish status-seeking
purposes (Atwal and Williams, 2009), luxury shopping is considered to be more hedonic than functional.

The dimensions of LSE

Although experience is a core matter in the definition of luxury, only few research have specifically focused on the components or the dimensions of the shopping experience concept in this particular sector.

According to Okonkwo (2010), the experience of luxury boutique is the sum of the store visit, the immersion in a highly aesthetic and creative world, the prestigious ambiance of the point of sales and the interaction with products by touching them and sometimes by feeling them.

Based on the definitions of luxury and its components, Atwal and Williams (2009) have identified four specific and experiential areas for luxury: entertainment, educational, escapist, and aesthetics. The Entertainment experiences aims at incorporating entertainment into areas outside the immediate experience, like a restaurant or a bar in a boutique. In the Educational zones, participants acquire new skills or increase those they already have (training of the brand know-how, technicity of a material…). Escapist activities aim at putting the consumer in another universe, to live a dream (this can be fostered for example through the use of celebrity endorsements). And finally, activities in the Aesthetic zone allow to develop admiration of the architectural or interior design of designer boutiques. Although these dimensions help to better identify how the luxury shops are organized, they do not take into account consumer perceptions or expectations.

In the same perspective, without investigating luxury consumers’ perspective, Batat (2017) set out several characteristics or recommendations of what a retail experience should be in luxury. The first recommendation is an ultra-customized customer experience. The experience must be centered on a hyper-personalized service according to the customers’ profiles. The
second recommendation relates to the customer experience which should be as fluid as possible. This refers to customer support as soon as it enters the store. The third recommendation states that the client experience must be immersive. This requires the implementation of an experiential storytelling and its translation into storydoing. Finally, the last recommendation pertains to the integration of the digital experience. It is linked to the incorporation of technology and connected objects into the in-store and retail offerings.

Thus, while the shopping experience is essential in the luxury sector, no research on consumer perceptions has identified the dimensions on which the concept is based. Some recommendations are highlighted but not verified on luxury consumers (Atwal and Williams, 2009; Okonkwo, 2010; Batat, 2017). Moreover, the dimensions of the shopping experience concept highlighted in the mass market have not been tested in the luxury sector (Verhoef and al, 2009; Spena and al., 2012). It seems necessary to carry out a specific study in order to identify the dimensions of the concept.

3. Research methodology

Objectives and methodology

The main objective of the methodology is to identify the dimensions of Luxury Shopping Experience through consumer discourse. In order to do so, a qualitative methodology is implemented, based on semi-directive interviews with luxury consumers. The interview guide used is divided into three main parts: the link between the consumer and the luxury, their experience in store and their expectations (comparing what they have experienced and what they would expect to live in a luxury boutique) see Appendix. The interviews were conducted during two phases; the first was completed in 2015 and the second during 2017. Respondents
were interviewed at home in order to encourage discussion. The interviews lasted around an hour. They were recorded and fully transcribed. Firstly, the analysis of interviews was done manually via a categorical thematic analysis. This first step of the analysis allowed identifying dimensions of the Luxury Shopping Experience. This has also led on one hand to the identification of two main kind of luxury perceptions: luxury for oneself and luxury for others and on the other hand the differences regarding the expected shopping experience. Secondly, in order to go deeper into the results, the analysis of consumer discourse is categorized using a semiotic square relying on the semantic opposition identified in the first step of the analysis (luxury for oneself – luxury for the others). The semiotic square is particularly useful and used to account for the diversity of signals and the meaning to which they refer. The semiotic square passes the number of analytic classes resulting from a given semantic axis from two to four (Floch, 1988, 2001; Alves de Oliveira, 1996), thanks to three types of relation (Figure 1):
- the relation of contrariety or semantic opposition, represented by the horizontal lines,
- the contradiction relation, represented by an oblique and which corresponds to a negation and
- the complementary relation, vertical, which corresponds to the assertion operation.

Figure 1: the relations in semiotic square (Floch, 2001)
The semiotic square based on the semantic opposition "for oneself - for others" has already been used in previous research on luxury (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999, 2004) and the four categories has been defined as following:

- Luxury for oneself (or personal luxury) appeals to values of search for pleasure, emotion. The sensory, imaginary and emotional aspects of the consumer experience are dominant. Consumers are looking for personal and sensory harmony.
- Luxury for others (or interpersonal luxury) includes strong social motivations. Consumers seek to distinguish themselves, to differentiate themselves, to show a social rise. Consumers seek ostentation to show the difference.
- Luxury not for others values intimacy. Consumers have a desire to consume luxury without being seen and perceived by others. They are in the rejection of ostentation.
- And luxury not for oneself emphasizes the desire to conform to a group and includes oneself in a dominant social class. Consumers are looking for conformity.

Sample

Eighteen individual interviews were conducted. The sample is composed of 8 men and 10 women aged from 27 to 55 years, living in Belgium, France or Monaco. To be part of the sample, consumers has to have already bought and consumed luxury products in the following product categories: ready-to-wear, accessories (bags and shoes), watches and jewelries. Focusing on these product categories allows us to analyze the LSE dimensions especially on the intermediate and the inaccessible levels of luxury and to exclude accessible luxury which is not relevant in this study. Consumers are also categorized according to their frequency of purchase of luxury brand products (regular or occasional) and according to their vision of
luxury (according to the 4 positions of the semiotic square luxury for oneself - luxury for others). This categorization is done via verbatim analysis (Table 1).

Table 1: characteristics of consumer’s sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Type of luxury consumer</th>
<th>Vision of luxury</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury not for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury not for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury not for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury not for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Man</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury not for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury for others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Woman</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Occasional</td>
<td>Luxury for oneself</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>woman</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Regular</td>
<td>Luxury not for other</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Results

The analysis of the interviews shows that, overall, all respondents believe that the product is not enough when they make a luxury purchase. It is necessary that the product of a luxury brand is sold in a prestigious environment ("The context must be luxurious, as the image of the brand" N° 5). When they want to go shopping, the persons interviewed in this study make clearly a distinction between the world of luxury and the world of mass consumption ("You're not going to buy Louboutin shoes at Shoe Discount" N° 3).

The shopping experience is seen as a global concept ("Everything goes together" N° 3) but the study of the verbatim shows that several dimensions and sub-dimensions can be identified. Moreover, the analysis shows that these dimensions do not have the same place according to
the way consumers perceive luxury (and in particular according to the four positions of the semiotic square: luxury for oneself - luxury for others).

*Shopping Experience dimensions for luxury brands*

The analysis of the interviews allowed us to identify three dimensions peculiar to the luxury shopping experience: the Synaesthesia dimension, the Epicurean dimension and the Social Exception dimension. Each dimension is composed by several sub-dimensions:

- **Synaesthesia Dimension**
  It emerges that the respondents are very sensitive to the stimulation of their various senses during their venues in luxury shops. That stimulation can arise from different sources: Shop aesthetic and/or experience dramatization.

  o As far as shop aesthetic is concerned: consumers should be impressed "you go into a luxury store as when you go into a museum" (N° 2). The beauty of the place should be emphasized and should put the light on the brand and on the products "the decoration adds some value for the exposed goods" (N° 5); “shops are all beautiful” (N° 13). “The aesthetic is also through the comfort: it is multisensorial. You have to be comfortable, something has to smell nice... I expect to be in a nice place...” (N° 15); “the outside of the shop should be great with highlighted windows shop” (N° 16); Use of high end decoration material is also stressed: “Inside, it has to be a purified design, with noble materials (leather, Velvet, marble, carpet)” (N° 16).

  o As far as experience dramatization is concerned: It includes the staging of the experience which allows to make the purchase a special moment: “I was sitting
alone in this room, I was offered a coffee and asked to wait. And a large door opened, a man came with my car in the middle of the room” (N° 2). This also includes the dramatization of the brand, of its story and the manufacture of its products: « when we went to Jaeger-LeCoultre, there was a real experience because the salesman showed us the whole brand universe... When you enter at Jaeger-LeCoultre, you have the feeling to come into a house... and there he made us come upstairs he showed us watches I could never afford, but he explained us how the watches are working, their history.. » (N° 14).

- Epicurean dimension

This dimension refers to the pleasure and to the fact that consumers want to personally take advantage of their experience in the shop and include emotions and relationships that could be built and/or the temporality of luxury in the shop.

○ Regarding the emotion and the relationship: It is related on one hand to the feelings conveyed during the visit in shop: “you know you go there to please yourself; it is really nice” (N° 2); “a pleasure, a personal satisfaction” (N° 3); “you have an affective interaction with the place... For the pleasure...” (N° 13). It is also the sincerity of the relationships that could be built: “It is related to the salesperson ... It is the contact with the person who represent the brand which makes the difference...” (N° 13); “What’s matters it is the relational... empathy ... I find it great only if the salesman comes to you with empathy, sincerity, warmth... it is a question of human contact... Sincerity of the contact, empathy” ... (N° 15).

○ Regarding Temporality: it refers to the necessary time to enjoy luxury: “to feel that I have time... and thus that someone is going to give time to me and to my request”
(N° 15); “I was accompanied during the choice” (N° 13). Taking your time, not feeling rushed when you are in a luxury shop is also mentioned by the respondents: “Without being rushed” (N°13); “I hate feeling in a hurry to buy something” (N° 16); “The creator came to me, explained how it was handmade and spent around one hour and a half with me” (N° 17).

- Social Exception dimension:

This dimension refers to emphasizing the client, the importance given to the consumer to show him how exceptional he is. This relates to the welcome, information and advice given but also to the enhancement of the client.

  o Regarding Welcoming / Information, it is a question of knowing how to welcome the customer in an atmosphere which delights him, which allows him to show that he is not in any shop but well a shop selling luxury goods: “The way we are spoken is very important, the way we are welcome” (N° 1); “As far as I know I will be welcome with a small coffee” (N° 2); “For me it is really nice, I appreciate that salesperson take care of me” (N° 9), “the salesman is fawning all over me; Yes they even offered me a drink” (N° 11). This welcome is not specific at the entrance of the shop but all along the experience: “I like it as there are a lot of people to help us but they leave us alone. Moreover, they are very pleasant” (N° 8). “I go there to make myself butter up” (N° 18).

  o Regarding enhancement: this happens through the feeling of being important, unique: “that gives you the feeling to be important” (N° 1); “this day I was like a king” (N° 2); “so I go there for a while now and they probably recognize me” (N°8); “I feel like I am unique at that moment. Being unique, the salesman is only focussing on me, ask me questions, is attentive to my reactions, offers me Champaign in some shops... Need to be enhanced, we are about to spend a lot of
money!" (N° 17). The enhancement is also implemented through material demonstrations like the use of visible and ostentatious packaging: “like a ring box; and the fact to put it in a beautiful packaging is a way for the brand to say thank you to choose me, we hope you will be back” (N° 2); “I consider that when I buy a luxury item, I have to have a bag, a packaging with the logo of the brand” (N° 9); “For me it is important, I am proud t go out with my purchase in a beautiful bag” (N° 10); “And I was proud with my Louboutin bag” (N° 13). Packaging is sometimes so important that luxury consumers look for them particularly: “Sometimes I say to myself "do I go for packaging or clothing?" (N° 7). “I keep them all... bags, dustbags, even empty, even if I am travelling and that I have trouble to put the big box in my luggage I want to keep them!” (N° 18).

Dimensions analysis regarding luxury consumers’ perspective

The luxury consumers have different visions and representations of what is luxury. The semantic opposition “Luxury for the others - Luxury for oneself” is used through a semiotic square representing 4 positions / 4 visions of the luxury. According to the visions, the analysis of the interviews shows us that the consumers do not give the same importance to each LSE dimensions and sub-dimensions (Figure 2).

- Luxury for oneself: pleasure and emotion

Among the interviews, 5 respondents (N°: 3, 6, 9, 14, 17) consider luxury for oneself by emphasizing their personal pleasure and the emotions they feel: “3 words quality, reliability, pleasure” (N° 6); “and just to make you dream” (N° 14). On the 5 respondents, 3 are men and 2 are women, aged from 35 to 45 years old, buying regularly luxury. For these persons,
synaesthesia and epicurean dimensions are dominant. They are looking for well-being experience through what they can feel emotionally, relationally and sensitively.

- Luxury for others: social exception

Among the interviews, 7 respondents (N°: 1, 2, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16) consider luxury for the others, emphasizing their need of social exception: “Luxury is all about status, the one that you have in our society and the way people are seeing you” (N° 1); “Brands, anybody cannot afford them, these brands are privilege” (N° 11); “to differentiate yourself from the others. Luxury must be expensive in order to prevent everyone can have access to it” (N° 12). On the 7 respondents, 3 are men and 4 are women. They are aged between 27 and 55 years old and their purchase frequency is variable. For these persons, synaesthesia and social exception dimensions are significant. They wish a social enhancement through the place in which they go shopping but also through the bunch of services they are offered.

- Not luxury for oneself: Conformism

Among the interviews, 3 respondents (N°: 5, 10, 18) consider luxury as the negation of luxury for oneself, emphasizing their need of conformism and the willingness to integrate a wealthy social group: “Luxury is money and if you have money you can afford luxury” (N° 5); “a special world only accessible to some people” (N° 10). These respondents are women aged from 33 to 44 years old, buying occasionally for 2 of them and regularly for one. For these persons, social exception dimension is prevailing. They want salespersons to show them how important they are.

- Not luxury for the others: Intimacy
Among the interviews, 3 respondents (N°: 4, 8, 15) consider luxury as a negation of luxury for others emphasizing the required intimacy that luxury presuppose: “all I buy is not to show my neighbour, my friends” (N° 8); “I think that real luxury is something that should not be ostentatious... I do not want to make myself look good like some others do” (N° 15). These respondents are 2 men and 1 woman aged from 35 to 49 buying regularly. For these persons, epicurean dimension is prevailing. They are essentially looking for a sharing experience, a true relationship.

5. Discussion

The aim of this research is to shed light on the LSE dimensions through the luxury consumer perceptions and expectations. Indeed, several research were led on the shopping experience allowing to identify the elements which compose it but in the mass market context. Even if shopping experience in luxury is essential, no research had been made, up to now, to identify
the specific dimensions. On the basis of a qualitative methodology made up of 18 interviews with luxury consumers and analyzed through a thematic analysis then a semiotic analysis, three dimensions and six sub-dimensions of LSE have been identified: the synaesthesia dimension – composed by the aesthetics and the dramatization -, the epicurean dimension – composed by the relation / emotion and the temporality- and the social exception dimension – composed by the welcome / information and the enhancement. It was also highlighted that according to the luxury consumers perception (and the semiotic square "luxury for oneself - luxury for the others"), LSE dimensions do not have the same importance: people considering the luxury for oneself particularly put forward synaesthesia and epicurean dimensions; people considering the luxury for others put forward synaesthesia and social exception dimensions; people considering the luxury not for oneself put forward social exception dimension and finally, people considering the luxury not for the others put forward the epicurean dimension. These results bring us to several theoretical and managerial contributions.

_Theoretical contributions_

First, these results of this research confirm the importance of the shopping experience in luxury beyond the purchase. This is in line with previous research which already pointed out the importance of experience without investigating luxury consumers perceptions (Lipovetsky and Roux, 2003; Keller, 2009; Batat, 2017).

Second, this research is the first to focus on the shopping experience in the luxury sector by interviewing consumers and to highlight Luxury Shopping Experience dimensions. Identified dimensions related to the luxury sector (synaesthesia, epicurean and social exception) can be compared with previous research about shopping experience in the mass market (Verhoef and al, 2009; Spena and al, 2012): sensory dimension in the mass market can be compared with
synaesthesia dimension in the luxury; the emotion dimension with epicurean dimension in the luxury and social dimension with social exception dimension in the luxury. However, even if there are similarities, there are significant differences. Indeed, in luxury, everything is in the hyper or the extraordinary. Every dimension is sublimated in connection with luxury specificities.

The results of this research can also be compared with previous research on luxury and the components of experience. Okonkwo (2010) had identified 4 founding elements of the experience: the aesthetics, the creativity, the prestige and the interaction with objects. These elements could however be present in shops which do not belong to the sphere of the luxury. By questioning luxury consumers, this research goes beyond and allows to identify LSE specific dimensions. In the same perspective, four zones of experience have been identified by Atwal and Williams (2009). On these four zones, three of them (entertainment, educational, escapist) appear as relatively identical and can be related to the dramatization dimension highlighted in this research. The fourth zone (aesthetics) refers to the synaesthesia dimension.

Finally, the analysis of the dimensions according to the different visions of luxury for the consumers (according to the semiotic square "luxury for oneself - luxury for the others") allows to confirm that there is not only one single type of luxury consumers but well several (Dubois and Laurent, 1996; Kapferer, 1998; Kapferer and Bastien, 2012).

**Managerial contributions**

Globally these results stress the importance of shopping experience for luxury consumers. In the actual context of higher competition, luxury brands should set the priority on the experience itself in order to keep their consumer dreaming for each of their shop visit. With the development of online shopping, providing a great experience in shop will definitely be a success factor to make consumers keep coming in the shops. This can be illustrated by the
very regular renewals of store concepts, as is the case on Place Vendôme in Paris, a mythical and emblematic place of luxury jewelers. The objective of these brands is to offer new shopping experiences.

Regarding these results, in particular the relation between the LSE dimensions and the luxury consumer profiles according to their vision of the luxury, luxury shops should all develop the three highlighted LSE dimensions (and the six sub-dimensions). Indeed, as it is not easy to distinguish the consumers' profiles, brands should be able to satisfy all luxury consumers. The role of sale’s advisor would be to try to distinguish the expectations of every consumer to put forward one and/or several LSE dimensions.

As far as luxury brands are concerned, they should adapt each dimension and sub-dimension to their identity and universe. Actually, luxury brands should stress their differentiation. For example, synaesthesia dimension will not be implemented the same way in a Dior shop than in a Chanel Shop, both at the aesthetic and dramatization level.

**Limits and future path of research**

Although many precautions have been taken, this research is not free of limits. First the sample that has been interviewed is composed of Belgian and French respondents. This limits the perspective of the results at the French speaking context. It would be interesting to enlarge the scope of the sample to a more international level in order to take into account several cultural luxury visions. Moreover, this research relies on what respondents declare but it will add a significant value to the results to effectively observe how they behave in luxury boutique. It will be interesting to complete this study with a field observation in shops by using semiotic analysis.

**References**


Appendix

Extract from interview guide

Introduction

Some questions about the definition and the consumption of luxury products for each interview (what? How, how much? How often? Which brand?) …

Phase of deepening

- Regarding the purchase of luxury products in shops

Describe a luxury purchase experience that you remember as being nice.

(Go deeper on each stage of the purchase: entrance in the shop, expectations, welcome, information, contact with salesperson, payment, packing)

Describe the after purchase: contact with the brand? Why? expectations?

Examples of questions:

- Globally how would you define luxury shopping experience
- Some studies have shown the impact of the shop environment on consumer behaviour. According to you which aspect could influence you?
- In a shop, how the 5 senses impact your consumption? your experience?
- What could influence you to stay longer in a shop despite the fact that you have a lot to buy?
- Do you have the feeling to live a special moment when you are buying luxury? Something special about the environment?
- Do you have in mind an unsatisfactory experience while buying a luxury product? Explain.

- Regarding the online luxury purchase

- Some insights about any luxury online purchase: why? When? What kind of websites? Which budget?
- Describe the online experience? Positive or negative? Why?
- According to you what are the pregnant elements to make the online experience satisfactory?
- Do you think that luxury brand should provide some specific services online like customization etc.
- Do you have in mind an unsatisfactory experience while buying a luxury product online? Explain.

Personal information

- Gender
- Age
- Job
- Civil status
- Wage