

Effect of Lifestyle on Consumers of Luxury Goods

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ABSTRACT

The improvement of economical factors all over the world and increasing inclination of the societies to consume luxurious goods caused that most people consider the luxurious name and brand. Different reasons such as imitating the life style of wealthy people, high social position, high quality of the products, etc caused that people purchase Mercedes Benz or BMW. Now, the supply of luxurious products including fashion and equipments, leader goods, perfume, cosmetics, jewelries, automobile, hotels and decoration are increased all over the world. In this paper, it is attempted by investigation the life style and different types and its effect on consumers of luxurious goods study it.

KEYWORDS: Life style; consumer behavior; luxurious goods; consumption.

INTRODUCTION

Social position of people is affected by their assets. These are clothes, automobile, jewelries, food and social identity is affected considerably by it. (Tossmann, 2000, P1) luxurious goods due to the complexities and its importance are different from other kinds of the commodities like consumption goods (Okonkwo 2009, p. 303).

Luxurious goods indicate the wealth and success of its consumers.

The sociologists classify the social structure based on the following concepts:

- Social status
- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity

Some of the above-mentioned items say about what we belong to; it means that they give identity feeling, thus identity is of items of social structure, social position, gender, ethnicity and religion.

Life style is like identity: it means that the life style of people is a part of their identity. Life style is the most important source of identity. It means that it is important what you wear, or what is the carpet of your house and or what is your favorite music. This importance is like your belongings to social position in the past.

Classification of luxurious and non-luxurious goods is not possible easily and we cannot classify them based on the characteristics of goods in luxurious and non-luxurious groups. For example, a car that is an ordinary commodity in an advanced country is a luxurious commodity in a developing country. Luxurious and non-luxurious goods are expressed based on our perspective of uniqueness, extraordinariness and quality. The consumption of luxurious brands for people looking for superior social statues is of great importance. This means that the social status of people has direct relation with the consumption of luxurious goods in their life (Atwal&Williams, 2009, p339).

Some of the reasons being effective in the formation of the growth of luxurious goods consumption is as follows:

- a. Income increase, reduction of unemployment rate, reduction of production costs, increasing number of wealthy people in developing countries and the increase in the presence of women in labor market
- b. The consumption of luxurious goods in low-income people.

The reason of this increase is the inclination of today consumers is imitating the life style of wealthy people and increasing social status and using high quality products and more enjoyment of the life and social wellbeing. Thus, the market of luxurious goods is seen as mass markets that not only include the wealthy people in the society but also middle class people.

The definition of life style

Subl had defined the most comprehensive definition about life style and believed that: "Almost there is not empirical agreement or concept about the producer of life style". Some people believe that we can define this depending upon what is studied by different methods and its definition does not contradict other methods of using this concept. It is necessary to define the background in which this concept is used. Some people like Roberts

believe that no one is entitled to define the definition of this concept. He believed that concepts are not private property of the sociologists or psychologists or any other person. Only, everybody is obliged to justify the importance of the definition that is accepted by showing its new results. These positions show the difficulty of giving a life style. Life style is indeed the mode or life style of a person. Life style is related to economical-social life and is reflected in the image of a person. Life style is the method of living of social groups of the society in which people in the society by following behavior models, beliefs, social norms and values or selecting cultural symbols and special position, reveal their belongings to it (Mohammad Qazli, 2003).

Life style as the set of behaviors

The definition based on consumption model

Lazer for the first time in 1963 defined life style based on commodity purchase model. He believed that “Life style indicates different life method of the society or social group...it is a method by which the consumer buys and the method by which the purchased commodity is consumed reflects life style of the consumer in the society. Although this definition is not used for marketing studies because consumption and purchase model as marketers are looking for it, is only describing it but it is important as the first definition referring to the concept of consumption model.

Subl after discussing about the definition of life style writes:” It is reasonable that we accept that life style can be observed or deducted from the observation and then it is emphasized that consumption model is the best index of life style. In addition, consumption model can make the highest relationship between people and their social status and it has more analytical importance. Lamont et al besides emphasizing on the method of organizing personal life, knows recreation and consumption model the best life style index and David CHini considers life styles” consumption social organization”. He believes that “life style is the organized consumption method, understanding or prioritizing materialistic cultural products...” and “...there is a special method to use the special commodities, times and places...” Rob Shields considers the classification of consuming the goods, the life style but with the condition that in this group by classification we can define the style of behavior, taste and symbolic codes. Iski only refers to consumption model and Buserman besides referring to consumption model, knows the value of consumption models a part of life style (Mohammad Qazli, 2003).

The behavior of consumer

The behavior of consumer is a challenging issue including people and what they buy, the reason of purchase, marketing and marketing mix and market. The physical, emotional and mental activities that people do during selection, purchase, using and disposal of the commodity and services to fulfill their needs are defined. In another definition, the behavior of consumer is defined as: the activities that are done directly to attain, consume and dispose the commodity and service. These activities include decision process being done before and after this action. Young people of a society are the biggest consumer groups of luxurious goods. The reason is flexibility in providing the required capital and their ability in attaining money to provide luxurious goods. However, we shouldn't ignore the competition of this level to attract the attention in the society and this changes the consumption model of that society (Ibid, 375).

The definitions and characteristics of luxurious goods

The term “Lux” is derived of the Latin word “Luxus” and in Oxford dictionary means exaggeration, comfort and luxury” (Christodoulides et al, 2009, P397). Luxurious commodity means:” the products and services with high quality compared to the same level commodities and are not unavailable in terms of price” (Atwal & Williams, 2009, P 340). What is a luxurious good? Luxurious good is a commodity that is not essential in the life and by a brief view of the supermarkets and credit cards, we find that a few number of these purchases are necessary in the life. The nature of luxurious commodity is understood when something very expensive is given as an advantage (e.g. quality, credit, etc). Luxurious commodity is investigated from two aspects (Tossman, 2000, P1). Luxurious goods are important for people that used them personally and the consumers of these kinds of commodities give more importance for the support and compliment of others even this value is only in their imagination. Luxurious goods based on socio-economic class are formed in a hierarchy consisting of 3 levels considering the availability as: At the bottom of the hierarchy is accessible luxury, which refers to luxury products that are attainable by the middle socio-economic class and the people of this level try to improve their social and economical position by buying these goods. The next level in the hierarchy is intermediate luxury, which relates to the products attainable by professional socio-economic class. The top level is including special luxurious goods which is associate with an elite socio-economic class and the products in this level are given by high price and bring special social status for the users (Christodoulides & et al, 2009, p397). Luxurious goods have special characteristics

including dignity, creativity, skill and precision in production, special influence of trade brand in the mind of the customer, exclusion and limit in giving product, high quality of global fame and unique pricing for special customers and industrial fame of the main manufacturing country like Swiss watch, Belgian chocolate, Golden Lamborghini) (Okonkwo, 2009, P 304). Exclusion, position and quality of luxurious goods are traditional characteristics of these commodities. However, consuming model of the customers in western communities is resulted into a new meaning for luxurious goods (Atwal & Williams, 2009.p 339).

Life style nature

As it is shown in chart 1 in a classified form, life style is the life method of a person and life style shows the external view of self-conception in the life environment and his choices in the routine life. Life style of a person is formed by his previous experience, characteristics and his current position and affects all his consumption behavior aspects. Life style of a person is dependent upon his hereditary- personal characteristics that is formed in interaction with social environment and transition of different periods of life (Del I.Hawkins&Mothersbaugh, 2010, P434).

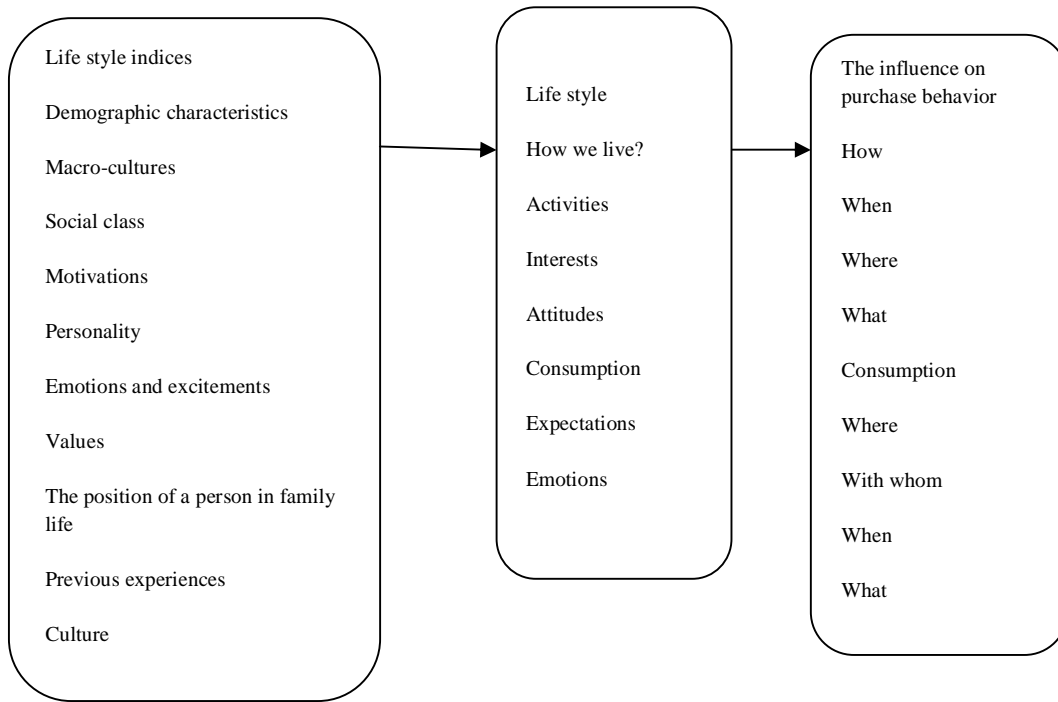


Chart 1: The relationship between self-conception and an image of a brand

The people and families have life style. Life style of a family is influenced to some extent by life style of people and the members of that family and vice versa. Favorite life style of a person affects his needs and inclinations and the behavior of the consumer and it shows most of his consumption decisions and they can themselves affect the life style of people and improve or change them. The consumers rarely are aware of the role the life style plays in their purchase decisions. Life style gives mostly the motivations and instructions of purchase to people but this is done indirectly in the mind of people. In other words, life style of a person is not formed by his decision to select a restaurant or special product but it is formed unconsciously (Del I.Hawkins&Mothersbaugh, 2010, P435).

The definition of life styles

Life styles are a set of beliefs, values, behaviors, tastes in everything ranging from music to art and TV and flower planting, interior design and carpeting the house, etc. Lifestyle means external aspect of internal perception of a person from himself; it means that the method of a person life based on these abilities is mostly affected by his current perception of himself and his ideal perception. Also, by a review of the behavior of consumer we can find that people form their mentioned assumptions and life style on internal effective factors (mostly psychology and physical) and external (mostly social and sociology). When people are encountered with related positions, decision-

making process of purchase is activated unconsciously in their mind. This process and experiences and the related achievement via affecting internal and external factors on the attitude of people to their life styles and themselves (Del I.Hawkins&Mothersbaugh, 2010, P.26, 27). Life style is not personal behavior components and they are not uncommon. But most people believe that they should select their life style freely and most of the time the elements of a life style are gathered and some people find some common points in a life style. In other words, social groups mostly own a kind of life style and create a style. The concept of life style means adjusting a style strategy in the life. For example, it is important for a person to be famous like a singer, even if the singer eats Tiland food and paint the wall of his house or entertain themselves in the house not outside, etc.

Advertisements, TV, newspapers, internet, etc publish new images of life style continually. Thus, this is important in communication world. Public music, TV, etc, advertisements and images provide potential images of life style. But these images allow people to think, imagine and organize what satisfies them to build. Thus, it can be said that the main characteristics of youth culture is to be seen, manifestation and being observed. Loving a special kind of music (e.g. Rap, Heavy metal), specific hairstyle, clothes, etc form different cultures of the youth. Special language is cultural symbol of the youth. All characteristics of consumption society are based on the formation of life styles.

Consumption society and life style

A part life style is obtained of consuming the commodities and services and leisure time and life style depend upon consuming many things. People buy some goods to show their life style, while building a life style by consuming commodities is showing or pretention of the selection of a person, it is a social model. Due to this fact, an industry is provided to respond these needs: consuming leisure time, smoking and alcohol, etc.

Some people use the term “consumption society” to show the life style method and its formation. Thus, consuming society thought shows leisure commodities, the main belonging in the life and the main interests of people to life styles. Here we should study the characteristic of consumption society.

Symbolic creativity: buying clothes is the main habit of the youth culture, but shopping compared to style, fashion, etc is neglected. Shopping is considered a private and women issue. But it is not an issue that the youth are passive and non-critical. The youth transfer the meaning of the purchased commodities. It means that these goods include the style of mass market, etc. the youth by wearing clothes or the composition of wearing clothes created new meanings. The youth have their own aesthetic justifications of wearing clothes and shopping and sometimes don't accept the definitions of fashion in clothing industry. Therefore, they are not totally under the influence of consumption society and manufactures.

New form of social life: The main hypothesis is that life styles are the characteristics of the modern world or modernity characteristics. In the current world, anyone has a special life style describing his action and others'. Life styles are action models distinguishing people from each other. In the modern world, life style helps the description of value and attitudes and show the social wealth of people. Life style shows how we should classify our life style.

Why life style is important?

1. The development of life style in the modern society. The relationship between consumption and life style. It means that how life style and consumption motivated many researches to show that using consumption commodities are used to distinguish identity.
2. The review of the work of social theorists that attempt to explain the meaning of fashion style in the modern culture.
3. The explanation of definite issues of life style such as feelings, people and self.
4. Aesthetic aspect of routine life.

Life style shouldn't be mistaken for culture. It can be said that culture is the total life styles in the community, the total values, attitudes, traditions, etc. Life style is the set of actions and attitudes being meaningful in special areas. But it should be said that this is the important question that whether this life style is commodities or consumption method of goods or producing things, a reflective issue? Life styles in routine life of people show the wide complexities of identity and dependency. Some of them are imposed by routine life, artificial or adjusted creatures.

Life style is based upon social organization of consumption not social organizational of production that is based on hierarchical structure. So, briefly it can be said that the evidences show that the increasing importance of life style is due to re-evaluation of materialistic culture and this is separated of money value of objects and this re-assessment is related to cultural and social value of objects.

There are considerable differences about the perception of people of luxurious goods, namely among old and young people. Age experience of customers affects their perception of luxurious goods. There are different

motivations for buying among consumers of luxurious goods and these motivations can be influenced by life style of the consumers of these commodities (William E.Hauck &Stanforth, 2007, P 175).

Consumers always try to improve and change themselves and do some activities to challenge them. They are described according to their life style (Elena fraj&Martinez 2006, P133). The attitude and style that consumers have about themselves and living environment and the importance of their health are formed in their attitude to their life style to consume luxurious goods. They are searching for a correct life style in which the consumption of luxurious goods is observed (Richard I.Divine&Lepisto, 2005, P 275).

Quality is the an important factors and strong financial position of a customer can have great influence on the consumption of goods for consumers or uniqueness of the commodity, thus rare products bring respect and prestige for consumers. The consumption of pretty and luxurious goods was satisfactory for people all over the world. Today, consumers have different income compared to the consumers in the past but this was considerably occurred in upper social class with different life style. The current consumers are inclined to give considerable amount of money for luxurious goods (Melika Hasic&Cicic.2009, P 231).

Conclusion

The major changes are increasing role of consumption in the world. We investigated the ideas and changes causing the new concept and reviewed some definitions that were presented for the new concept. Despite the variety of the definitions, they emphasize on three main parts, the definitions emphasizing on the life style, the definitions considering at the same time the behavior and mind and the definition considering the symbolic aspect of life style. Our first reasoning is that without the meaning of style we cannot give an exact definition of life style. The meaning of this term should be correct about what is life style. The coherence and generality are two main aspects of style. Then, life style is of behavior type and when something is a group phenomenon, it will be of importance for sociology and market research. It is not necessary to know the group life style synonym to it that group members that have the same life style have permanent interaction. In our definition, life style is a set of behavior that a coherence principle is dominant on it and covers a part of life and is observed among a group of people and is not distinguished for a group of people in the society. Although the social researchers distinguish between it and the rest of behaviors of people in the society, life styles can be distinguished or organized to be distinguished. Such a definition of life style opens a wide research plan. First, life style analysis is not restricted to the investigation of materialistic or cultural consumption. The analysis of life style is a research being fulfilled in practice in life and life include something more than consuming. Second, the research about life style is a concept that is in the middle of structure and selection of agents, its outcomes and consumption and other processes of new world, a method to test the social world in different aspects. Life style concept raise this hypothesis that perhaps, people are organized generality and the first step is to know what they do, not what they are thinking about. In addition, we can determine their behavior in different fields considering their other behaviors, not with knowing what is in their mind. At least the behaviors like minds have sociological value. If we know what people do, we can find why they are doing this and what unifies their behaviors. Considering the definition and nature of the life style creating a kind of identity feeling for the consumers and after this identity to distinguish themselves from the others consume the luxurious goods based on the following views:

1. Decision making view: This approach is related to cognitive psychology and economy. In this approach, it is defined that how the consumers find a problem and in some processes, try to logically solve it. These stages are including recognition of the problem, research, evaluation, selection and evaluation after acquisition.
2. Empirical view: Based on this approach, the consumers based on logical decision-making don't buy something. Sometimes they buy for entertainment, dreams, excitement and emotions. This approach is related to motivation psychology, sociology, and anthropology. The researchers who use the empirical view, use the interpretive methods of research. The interpreters even register the public culture and the traditions of the society to understand the process.
3. Behavioral view: In this view, it is assumed that strong environmental forces guide the consumer to the direction that he buys a commodity without strong beliefs and emotions. Here the consumer doesn't buy through logical process of decision making or based on the emotions. His purchase is due to the direct effect via environmental forces including sale advertisement tools, cultural norms, physical environment or economical pressures. It can be said that most of the purchases are including some elements of three views being influenced by life style.

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