

Luxury at a Cost

How Guilt and Anticipated Regret Influence Brand Loyalty in Luxury Consumption

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Abstract

This study examines the dual emotional dynamics of luxury consumption, focusing on the influence of guilt and anticipated regret on decision-making and brand loyalty. While previous research has largely emphasized positive outcomes like pride and satisfaction, this paper explores the under-researched psychological costs associated with indulgence in high-end goods. Using a mixed-methods approach, qualitative insights from focus groups are combined with quantitative neuromarketing techniques, including eye tracking and facial expression analysis, to uncover how negative emotions shape consumer behavior.

Results show that luxury consumption generates heightened emotional and cognitive engagement, with prolonged attention to brand and price, elevated physiological arousal, and increased expressions of sadness and anxiety compared to non-luxury products. Despite these challenges, personalized service and robust post-purchase support effectively mitigate negative emotions, reinforcing brand loyalty. Non-luxury products, in contrast, evoke lower emotional engagement, with loyalty driven primarily by practicality and accessibility.

By integrating negative emotional constructs into luxury consumption models, this study fills a critical gap in the literature. The findings provide actionable strategies for luxury brands to manage guilt and anticipated regret through enhanced customer experiences, while non-luxury brands can capitalize on efficiency and affordability. This research advances the theoretical and practical understanding of consumer behavior in luxury and non-luxury markets, offering a comprehensive framework for addressing emotional complexities.

Keywords: Luxury Consumption, Guilt and Anticipated Regret, Brand Loyalty, Neuromarketing Analysis, Consumer Behavior

1. Introduction

Luxury markets are celebrated for their ability to elicit positive emotional experiences, with consumers associating high-end purchases with pride, satisfaction, and a sense of achievement (Shahid & Paul, 2021). These products, characterized by exclusivity and superior craftsmanship, symbolize status and success, making them highly desirable to affluent individuals (Kapferer, 2012). However, beneath these aspirational transactions lies a nuanced emotional landscape where negative emotions, such as guilt and anticipated regret, significantly influence consumer behavior. While previous studies have focused on the positive outcomes of luxury consumption, such as social recognition and self-fulfillment (Islam et al., 2024; McFerran et al., 2014), limited attention has been given to the psychological costs of these purchases.

Anticipated regret and guilt represent distinct yet interconnected emotional dimensions in consumer decision-making. Anticipated regret is a forward-looking emotion stemming from concerns about potential dissatisfaction or missed opportunities after a purchase (Guan et al., 2024). Conversely, guilt arises retrospectively, reflecting on the ethical or financial consequences of decisions that may conflict with personal values or societal expectations (Barta et al., 2023). These emotions are particularly salient in the luxury context, where high financial stakes and symbolic significance heighten internal conflict, complicating purchase decisions and long-term brand relationships.

Existing research has largely emphasized the aspirational benefits of luxury products, such as pride, happiness, and enhanced self-image (Kapferer, 2012; Shahid & Paul, 2021). However, the tension between indulgence and restraint—a hallmark of luxury consumption—introduces a psychological duality that is underexplored (Kapferer, 2015). This study addresses a critical gap by investigating how guilt and anticipated regret impact key consumer outcomes, including brand loyalty and repurchase intentions, advancing the understanding of both positive and negative emotional dynamics in luxury markets.

To achieve this, the study employs a mixed-methods approach, starting with qualitative focus groups to uncover emotional constructs and subjective experiences, followed by a quantitative neuromarketing phase leveraging eye tracking and Affectiva facial expression analysis to measure subconscious responses. By integrating subjective insights with objective data, the research provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how these emotions influence consumer behavior.

The Latin American luxury market offers a particularly compelling context for this investigation due to its rapid growth and evolving consumer base. In Mexico, for instance, the luxury goods market is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 6.83% from 2024 to 2029, driven by expanding tourism and a burgeoning upper-middle class. Similar trends are observed in Brazil and Argentina, highlighting the region's significance in the global luxury landscape. This backdrop underscores the need to understand how negative emotions impact luxury consumption and adapt strategies to foster brand loyalty in this dynamic market.

This study provides both theoretical and practical contributions. It bridges a significant gap in the literature by incorporating negative emotions into models of luxury consumption, offering a more holistic understanding of the emotional drivers behind consumer behavior. Practically, the findings offer actionable strategies for luxury brands to manage emotional complexities, enabling them to enhance satisfaction, loyalty, and market positioning in an increasingly competitive global market.

2. Theoretical Background

Luxury consumption has been extensively studied for its positive emotional outcomes. Wang et al. (2024) highlight how luxury brands symbolize status, exclusivity, and accomplishment, offering an aspirational appeal that fulfills both psychological and social needs. These benefits align with the concept of symbolic consumption, where products transcend their functional value to reflect a consumer's ideal self-image (Islam et al., 2024). Similarly, Aeberhard et al. (2020) emphasize the emotional resonance of luxury brands, which position themselves not merely as providers of goods but as enablers of pride, happiness, and self-fulfillment. Such narratives underscore the enduring desirability and competitive advantage of luxury brands.

Luxury products are distinguished by their superior craftsmanship, exclusivity, and symbolic value, often commanding premium prices that position them as aspirational goods (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020). These items are typically purchased not for their functional utility but for their ability to signify status and success. In contrast, non-luxury products emphasize accessibility, practicality, and value-for-money, catering to a broader consumer base. Non-luxury items are primarily evaluated on functional attributes, such as durability or affordability, rather than emotional or symbolic benefits (Shahid & Paul, 2021). This distinction is critical for understanding emotional dynamics in consumption. While luxury goods evoke strong emotional responses tied to self-expression and social identity, non-luxury products often elicit utilitarian and transactional engagement, with fewer emotional complexities (Chen et al., 2014). The higher stakes associated with luxury purchases—due to their price and symbolic nature—make them particularly susceptible to negative emotions such as guilt and anticipated regret.

Despite the allure of luxury, recent research highlights the coexistence of positive and negative emotions in the consumption journey. While pride and satisfaction reinforce the symbolic connection to the brand, guilt and anticipated regret introduce psychological tension that complicates the consumer experience. This duality is particularly relevant for understanding brand loyalty, a construct often associated with repeated purchase behavior and emotional attachment to the brand (Kapferer, 2015). Brand loyalty in luxury consumption is influenced by both the aspirational value of the product and the emotional conflicts it evokes. Positive experiences, such as exceptional customer service or exclusive offerings, reinforce loyalty by validating the consumer's decision and mitigating post-purchase regret (McFerran et al., 2014). Conversely, unresolved negative emotions can erode loyalty by undermining trust and satisfaction, particularly in scenarios where the product fails to meet expectations or conflicts with personal values (Chen et al., 2014). In non-luxury markets, loyalty is often driven by practical factors such as affordability and convenience. While emotional engagement is lower in this context, consistency in quality and service remains pivotal for fostering repeat purchases (Shahid & Paul, 2021). The absence of significant emotional conflicts simplifies the decision-making process, creating a more transactional form of loyalty compared to the deeper symbolic attachment seen in luxury markets.

Guilt arises retrospectively when consumers perceive their purchase as violating personal values, financial goals, or societal norms (Barta et al., 2023). This emotion is particularly salient in luxury markets, where high prices often conflict with practical considerations or ethical concerns. For instance, societal judgments about extravagance can exacerbate feelings of guilt, especially in cultures that value modesty (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020).

Anticipated regret, on the other hand, is a forward-looking emotion triggered by fears of dissatisfaction or missed opportunities. This emotion is especially pronounced in high-stakes luxury purchases, where consumers weigh the symbolic value of the product against its practical utility (Lyons et al., 2018). Guan et al. (2024) describe how anticipated regret stems from concerns about whether the purchase will align with future satisfaction or social expectations, creating a pre-purchase anxiety that complicates decision-making.

Kapferer (2015) argues that the tension between hedonic desires and practical concerns lies at the heart of luxury consumption. While the symbolic value of luxury goods reinforces consumer-brand relationships, the psychological costs associated with guilt and regret introduce vulnerabilities that can undermine loyalty. Existing models of luxury consumption inadequately address these emotional complexities, focusing predominantly on aspirational benefits while neglecting the role of negative emotions (Chen et al., 2014).

This study extends prior frameworks by explicitly incorporating guilt and anticipated regret into models of consumer behavior. By examining how these emotions influence satisfaction and loyalty, the research bridges symbolic consumption theory with emotion-based decision-making models. This approach acknowledges the dual emotional nature of luxury consumption, offering a comprehensive understanding of its psychological and behavioral implications.

To explore these dynamics, this study employs a mixed-methods approach, beginning with qualitative focus groups to uncover the underlying emotional constructs and consumer narratives. These insights inform the quantitative phase, which incorporates neuromarketing tools such as eye tracking and real-time facial expression analysis to measure physiological responses. This methodological integration ensures a robust analysis that captures both subjective experiences and subconscious reactions.

By situating these findings within broader literature, this research contributes to the theoretical discourse on luxury consumption while offering actionable strategies for brands. Addressing the psychological burden of guilt and anticipated regret enables luxury brands to enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty, while non-luxury brands can focus on efficiency and practicality to maintain competitive positioning.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a mixed-methods approach to investigate the role of negative emotions, specifically guilt and anticipated regret, in luxury consumption. By combining qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the research explores how these emotions manifest, influence decision-making, and shape brand loyalty. The integration of subjective insights from focus groups with objective measures obtained through neuromarketing tools ensures a comprehensive analysis of the emotional dynamics underpinning luxury consumer behavior.

The study was conducted in two phases. The first phase employed qualitative methods to explore and identify the core emotional constructs associated with luxury purchases. The second phase used quantitative neuromarketing techniques to validate these findings and provide measurable insights into consumers' emotional responses.

Qualitative Phase: Focus Groups

The initial qualitative phase aimed to uncover the emotional and cognitive processes underlying luxury consumption. Twelve participants were recruited using purposive sampling to ensure they met specific inclusion criteria: all participants were regular consumers of luxury goods, aged between 25 and 55, and had purchased at least one luxury item, such as handbags, watches, or apparel, in the past year. The group was diverse in terms of demographics, capturing a broad spectrum of consumer perspectives.

Focus group discussions were held in a Gesell chamber to facilitate unobtrusive observation and ensure high-quality audio and video recordings. A semi-structured discussion guide was used to explore themes such as the emotional motivations for purchasing luxury items, the experience of guilt and anticipated regret during the decision-making process, and the role of post-purchase experiences in satisfaction and brand loyalty. The discussions, lasting approximately 90 minutes, were moderated

to encourage open dialogue while maintaining a neutral and non-judgmental environment. Participants were assured of confidentiality to foster honest and detailed responses.

The qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Transcripts were reviewed iteratively, and recurring patterns were coded to identify key themes. In the first stage, the analysis focused on identifying specific emotions linked to luxury consumption, such as guilt and anticipated regret. In the second stage, these themes were categorized into broader constructs, such as emotional drivers, decision-making conflicts, and post-purchase satisfaction. The findings from this phase informed the design of the subsequent quantitative study, providing a foundational understanding of the emotional dynamics in luxury consumption.

Quantitative Phase: Neuromarketing Analysis

Building on the insights from the qualitative phase, the quantitative phase employed neuromarketing tools to objectively measure participants' physiological and behavioral responses to stimuli related to luxury and non-luxury consumption. This phase aimed to validate the prevalence of guilt and anticipated regret identified in the focus groups and quantify their impact on consumer decision-making.

A sample of 50 participants was recruited for this phase, with stratified sampling ensuring representation across gender, income levels, and age groups. These participants were presented with visual and textual stimuli featuring both luxury (e.g., Prada handbags) and non-luxury (e.g., Zara handbags) products. Each stimulus included high-resolution images, price information, and brand descriptions to simulate realistic purchasing contexts. Participants engaged in two tasks during the experimental session.

Neuromarketing tools were used to capture behavioral and physiological data. Eye-tracking technology measured participants' visual attention, including fixation duration and scan paths, to identify areas of interest such as brand logos and price tags. Facial expression analysis, conducted using Affectiva, assessed real-time emotional responses such as sadness (indicative of guilt) and anxiety (linked to anticipated regret). Galvanic Skin Response (GSR) sensors measured physiological arousal during exposure to the stimuli, providing insights into the intensity of emotional engagement.

Data analysis employed both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Eye-tracking data were analyzed to compare attention patterns across luxury and non-luxury products. Emotional expression metrics were quantified to determine the prevalence of sadness and anxiety. GSR data were examined to identify peaks and average arousal levels, reflecting the emotional intensity elicited by each stimulus. These quantitative findings were compared with the qualitative insights to ensure coherence and triangulation of results.

Integration of Findings

The mixed-methods approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the emotional mechanisms driving luxury consumption. The qualitative phase provided rich contextual insights into how guilt and anticipated regret are experienced by consumers, while the quantitative phase validated these constructs with objective data. Together, these methodologies revealed the interplay between emotional triggers, decision-making processes, and post-purchase satisfaction, shedding light on the broader implications for brand loyalty.

This integration ensured that the study captured both subjective experiences and measurable emotional responses, offering a robust and comprehensive analysis. By triangulating qualitative and quantitative findings, the research provides actionable insights for luxury brands to address negative emotions effectively, enhance customer satisfaction, and foster long-term loyalty. This

methodological design underscores the importance of combining subjective and objective approaches to uncover the complex emotional dynamics at play in luxury consumer behavior.

4. Results

Study 1: Focus Groups

In the focus group conducted with participants from the luxury consumer market, complex behavioral patterns and emotions were identified during the luxury purchase process. Participants shared experiences where negative emotions, such as guilt and anticipated regret (see Table 1), played a crucial role in their purchasing decisions and subsequent satisfaction with the product. One participant remarked, "At first, before going through with it, it's like... do I really need it? But then, when I'm there, I don't value it as much." This reflects the internal struggle between rationality and emotion in luxury purchases. Another participant mentioned, "I bought some sneakers that I ended up not using because they were too tight... I got carried away by the moment's excitement." This highlights the tendency towards impulsive decisions that lead to later regret.

Table 1: Quotes representing each analyzed construct.

Guilt:

"I'm embarrassed to say how much I spent on a bag; I feel like I could have used that money for something more useful."

"I feel guilty about splurging on luxury when I could have saved that money for something more important."

"When I look at my closet, I sometimes think, 'Did I really need to spend so much on this?'"

Anticipated Regret:

"Before buying, I always think, 'Will I regret this later? Do I really need it?'"

"I hesitate because I worry that once I make the purchase, I'll regret spending so much."

"I often question if I'll end up using what I buy or if it will just sit unused."

Brand Loyalty:

"I keep going back because they treat me like I'm special; the experience makes all the difference."

"I've stayed loyal to this brand because they've always delivered exceptional service, even after the purchase."

"Even though I had a bad experience once, the way they handled it made me trust them even more."



In terms of brand loyalty, post-purchase experiences such as guarantees, and personalized attention play a key role. One participant said, "I liked how they treated me, made me feel special, and that makes me come back." However, another participant shared a negative experience: "I went to buy a watch, but since I was dressed simply, they didn't even assist me." This suggests that customer service perception can significantly influence brand loyalty. Guilt was also a recurring theme. "I'm embarrassed to say how much I spent on a bag; I feel like I could have used that money for something more useful," mentioned one participant, emphasizing the moral conflict that often accompanies luxury purchases. In summary, negative emotions like guilt and anticipated regret not only influence purchasing decisions but also affect brand loyalty and product satisfaction. This study underscores the importance for luxury brands to carefully manage these emotions through exceptional shopping experiences and robust post-sale services.

Study 2: Neuromarketing

The neuromarketing analysis revealed significant differences in emotional and behavioral responses between luxury (Prada) and non-luxury (Zara) products. See Table 2. These findings provide quantitative evidence of how guilt and anticipated regret manifest during interactions with products

from different market segments. Key metrics derived from the study, including visual attention (eye tracking), physiological arousal (GSR), and facial expression analysis (Affdex), highlight the emotional complexity of luxury consumption.

Table 2. Main results of neuromarketing study

Metric	Prada (Luxury)	Zara (Non-Luxury)
		
Time of fixation on prices (seconds)	4.7	2.4
Time of fixation on brand (seconds)	6.5	3.8
Peak of emotional activation (GSR)	1.9	0.8
Average level of emotional activation (GSR)	1.3	0.5
Facial expression of sadness (%)	35	18
Facial expression of anxiety (%)	28	15

Visual Attention (Eye Tracking)

Participants exhibited markedly different fixation patterns when engaging with luxury versus non-luxury stimuli. For luxury products, the time of fixation on prices was notably higher for Prada (4.7 seconds) compared to Zara (2.4 seconds). This suggests that participants paid more attention to the cost of luxury items, likely reflecting a heightened cognitive evaluation of the financial commitment involved, which aligns with feelings of guilt. Additionally, the time of fixation on brand elements was significantly longer for Prada (6.5 seconds) than for Zara (3.8 seconds). This indicates a stronger focus on brand identity and symbolic value when evaluating luxury items, underscoring the aspirational appeal of luxury products.

Physiological Arousal (GSR)

The analysis of galvanic skin response (GSR) revealed higher levels of emotional arousal when participants viewed luxury products. For Prada, the peak of emotional activation averaged 1.9, compared to 0.8 for Zara. Similarly, the average level of emotional activation was 1.3 for Prada and 0.5 for Zara. These results suggest that luxury items evoke stronger physiological responses, reflecting the emotional intensity and potential internal conflict associated with purchasing high-cost, high-status items.

Facial Expression Analysis (Affdex)

Real-time facial expression analysis showed significant differences in the prevalence of negative emotions between the two brands:

- Expressions of sadness, associated with guilt, were observed in 35% of interactions with Prada products, compared to 18% for Zara. This indicates that luxury products elicit a greater sense of regret or moral conflict, particularly concerning financial expenditure.
- Expressions of anxiety, often linked to anticipated regret, were recorded in 28% of interactions with Prada and 15% with Zara. This finding highlights the pre-purchase hesitation and decision-making stress more commonly associated with luxury goods.

The results from the neuromarketing phase provide empirical support for the role of guilt and anticipated regret in shaping consumer responses to luxury goods. Higher levels of visual engagement with prices and brand identity, coupled with increased emotional arousal and negative facial expressions, underscore the emotional and cognitive conflicts involved in luxury consumption. These findings complement the qualitative insights obtained from the focus groups, reinforcing the importance of addressing negative emotions in luxury branding strategies.

Luxury brands like Prada must consider these emotional dynamics when designing their marketing and customer service strategies. Mitigating guilt and anticipated regret through transparent pricing, customer reassurance, and post-purchase support can help enhance brand loyalty and long-term customer satisfaction. Conversely, the lower levels of emotional conflict observed for Zara suggest that non-luxury brands may benefit from their perception as accessible, low-risk alternatives. This comprehensive analysis of emotional and behavioral responses highlights the complex interplay between luxury and non-luxury consumption, offering actionable insights for brand positioning and consumer engagement strategies.

Emotional Complexity of Brand Loyalty:

The analysis revealed significant insights into the relationship between emotional responses and brand loyalty in the context of luxury (Prada) and non-luxury (Zara) products. Participants showed a longer fixation time on brand elements for Prada (6.5 seconds) compared to Zara (3.8 seconds), highlighting a stronger emotional and symbolic connection to the luxury brand. This prolonged attention indicates the aspirational value associated with Prada, which often reinforces brand loyalty. In contrast, Zara's shorter fixation times reflect a more transactional relationship, driven primarily by utility rather than emotional attachment.

Higher emotional activation levels for Prada, as evidenced by a peak GSR of 1.9 compared to Zara's 0.8, further emphasize the intense emotional engagement luxury products evoke. However, this engagement was accompanied by negative emotions such as sadness (35%) and anxiety (28%), which are linked to guilt and anticipated regret. While these emotions can challenge post-purchase satisfaction, qualitative insights suggest that Prada consumers often rationalize these feelings due to the perceived exclusivity and long-term value of the brand. Positive post-purchase experiences, including personalized attention and robust guarantees, were particularly effective in mitigating these emotions and reinforcing loyalty.

In contrast, Zara elicited lower levels of emotional activation and fewer negative expressions, such as sadness (18%) and anxiety (15%). This reflects a more straightforward and less emotionally charged shopping experience. While Zara's efficient and accessible customer service supports loyalty, it does not cultivate the deep emotional connections seen in luxury brands, resulting in a loyalty model driven more by practicality than aspiration.

Overall, the findings suggest that brand loyalty in luxury consumption is influenced by a complex interplay of positive and negative emotions. While guilt and anticipated regret can undermine loyalty

if left unaddressed, effective post-purchase strategies can transform these challenges into opportunities to reinforce trust and satisfaction. Luxury brands like Prada benefit from addressing these emotions through personalized services, emphasizing their aspirational value, and ensuring positive post-purchase experiences. Meanwhile, non-luxury brands like Zara maintain loyalty through a transactional approach focused on efficiency and accessibility. These dynamics underscore the importance of tailoring brand strategies to the emotional profiles of their target consumers.

5. Discussion

The results from both the qualitative (Study 1) and quantitative (Study 2) phases provide a nuanced understanding of the role of guilt and anticipated regret in shaping consumer behavior within luxury and non-luxury markets. Together, these findings illuminate the emotional complexity of luxury consumption and its implications for brand loyalty.

Study 1 revealed that guilt and anticipated regret are central emotional constructs in luxury consumption, as evidenced by participant narratives that described internal conflicts during and after the purchase process. Participants often highlighted the tension between rational decision-making and emotional impulses, which manifested in both pre-purchase hesitation and post-purchase dissatisfaction. For instance, guilt was frequently linked to financial concerns or the perception of extravagance (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020), while anticipated regret stemmed from fears of impracticality or underutilization of purchased goods (Lyons et al., 2018). These insights emphasize the dual nature of luxury consumption, where the aspirational appeal of products is often accompanied by psychological costs, confirming previous research that highlights the tension between indulgence and restraint in luxury purchases (Kapferer, 2015; McFerran et al., 2014).

Study 2 quantitatively validated these qualitative insights, demonstrating that luxury products evoke stronger emotional and physiological responses than their non-luxury counterparts. The longer fixation times on price and brand elements for Prada suggest heightened cognitive engagement, likely driven by the symbolic value of the brand and the financial implications of the purchase (Shahid & Paul, 2021). Additionally, higher emotional activation levels (as measured by GSR) and increased facial expressions of sadness and anxiety support the notion that luxury products elicit more intense emotional responses, including negative emotions such as guilt and anticipated regret (Chen et al., 2014). These findings align with narratives from Study 1, where participants described heightened anxiety and emotional strain during the decision-making process, corroborating Lyons et al.'s (2018) assertion that pre-purchase regret plays a significant role in high-stakes decisions.

Despite the presence of negative emotions, the findings highlight the resilience of brand loyalty within the luxury segment. Participants in Study 1 emphasized the importance of post-purchase experiences, such as personalized attention and robust guarantees, in mitigating negative emotions and reinforcing loyalty. Study 2 supports this observation, as consumers demonstrated a strong focus on brand elements for luxury products, suggesting a deep emotional connection that extends beyond the transaction (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020). This cognitive and emotional reconciliation appears to play a critical role in maintaining loyalty, even when the purchase is accompanied by guilt or regret. These findings resonate with Chen et al. (2014), who argue that post-purchase strategies such as flexible return policies and warranties are critical for reducing negative emotions and fostering trust.

In contrast, the results for non-luxury products (Zara) suggest a more utilitarian and transactional consumption experience. Shorter fixation times on price and brand, combined with lower levels of emotional activation and fewer expressions of sadness or anxiety, indicate that non-luxury purchases are less emotionally charged. This supports the findings of Lyons et al. (2018), who argue that purchases driven by practicality involve lower psychological risk and emotional investment. Consequently, loyalty in this segment is likely driven more by convenience and practicality than by emotional attachment or symbolic value (McFerran et al., 2014).

The combined findings underscore the importance of managing negative emotions in luxury branding. While guilt and anticipated regret can undermine satisfaction and loyalty, they can also be mitigated through strategic post-purchase interventions. Personalized customer service, flexible return policies, and clear communication about product value are critical in addressing these emotions (Kapferer, 2015; Chen et al., 2014). Furthermore, luxury brands can leverage their aspirational appeal to help consumers rationalize their purchases, transforming emotional conflicts into opportunities to reinforce the perceived value of the brand (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020).

For non-luxury brands, the emphasis lies in maintaining efficiency and accessibility to ensure continued consumer loyalty. While the emotional depth of these purchases is lower, ensuring a frictionless and reliable shopping experience remains key to retaining customers in a highly competitive market (Shahid & Paul, 2021).

Overall, the results from Studies 1 and 2 highlight the duality of luxury consumption, where aspiration and emotional complexity coexist. By addressing these dynamics, luxury brands can not only mitigate the potential downsides of negative emotions but also strengthen their long-term relationships with consumers. These findings provide actionable insights for luxury and non-luxury brands alike, emphasizing the need to align branding strategies with the unique emotional profiles of their target audiences. Future research could further explore the role of cultural and demographic factors in shaping these emotional dynamics, offering a deeper understanding of the global luxury consumer.

6. Conclusions

This study provides a nuanced understanding of the dual emotional dynamics in luxury consumption, focusing on the roles of guilt and anticipated regret in shaping consumer decisions and brand loyalty. By integrating these negative emotions into behavioral models, this research expands on existing frameworks that predominantly emphasize positive emotional outcomes such as pride and satisfaction (Kapferer & Valette-Florence, 2020; Shahid & Paul, 2021). These findings contribute to symbolic consumption theory by demonstrating how emotional conflicts emerge from the tension between aspirations for exclusivity and concerns about financial or practical consequences (Islam et al., 2024).

From a theoretical standpoint, this study highlights the importance of considering both positive and negative emotions in consumer behavior models, particularly in the context of high-stakes luxury purchases. By bridging symbolic consumption theory with emotion-based decision-making frameworks, the research advances the understanding of how emotional dynamics impact brand loyalty and satisfaction. The mixed-methods approach, incorporating qualitative focus groups and quantitative neuromarketing tools, provides a robust and comprehensive examination of these phenomena, offering new insights into the interplay between emotions and consumer behavior.

From a practical perspective, the findings underscore the necessity for luxury brands to address the emotional complexities of their consumers. Strategies such as transparent communication about product value, personalized services, and robust post-purchase support can mitigate the negative effects of guilt and anticipated regret (Lyons et al., 2020). Experiential marketing campaigns that emphasize the symbolic and aspirational value of luxury goods can help consumers rationalize their purchases, reducing the psychological costs associated with indulgence. Conversely, non-luxury brands can strengthen loyalty by maintaining accessibility, efficiency, and practical value, catering to a more transactional relationship with consumers.

Limitations

This study acknowledges several limitations. The relatively small sample size, particularly in the qualitative phase, may limit the generalizability of the findings beyond the Latin American context. Additionally, while the study offers insights into emotional dynamics, it focuses on short-term reactions, leaving the long-term implications of guilt and anticipated regret underexplored. Future

research should address these limitations by employing larger and more diverse samples and investigating the longitudinal effects of these emotions on brand loyalty and satisfaction.

Future Research Directions

Future research should extend the proposed framework to different cultural and socioeconomic contexts to explore how cultural values and regional differences shape the emotional dynamics of luxury and non-luxury consumption. Additionally, the integration of other consumer segments, such as millennials and Gen Z, could reveal generational variations in emotional responses to luxury goods. Finally, experimental designs that manipulate variables like price, exclusivity, and marketing communication could further validate and refine the framework, offering deeper insights into the triggers and outcomes of guilt and anticipated regret in luxury markets.

By addressing these avenues, future studies can build on this research to provide a more global and comprehensive understanding of luxury consumer behavior, further enriching both theoretical discourse and practical applications.

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