

4. Research Methodology

4.0. Introduction

The previous chapter covered the conceptual model of the research and elaborated the hypotheses that are to be tested. In the following chapter the analysis methods are presented, questionnaire development is discussed, and there will be the explanation of sampling, data collection and data analysis techniques. Overall, this chapter will cover how the study is carried out.

4.1. Research Design

The order of this research is first by identifying research variables and theoretical frameworks followed by the method of which the data could be collected, analyzed and finally arrive at a solution.

It is good to highlight that the purpose of this study is ‘Hypothesis Testing’ with a ‘Quantitative Approach’ along with the intention of testing the hypotheses that were developed in chapter three.

The data collection method of the current work is a combination of both primary and secondary sources. Questionnaires distributed among respondents to collect the primary data along with the secondary data which are obtained from past literature through published journals, articles, reports, theses and books.

4.2. Questionnaire Development

Due to the somehow original nature of the study, the questionnaire is assembled and combined based on the previous literature. Information susceptibility and normative susceptibility was adopted from Bearden et al. (1989), collectivism was adopted from Kongsompong, Green & Paterson (2009), personal gratification was adopted from Vinson et al. (1977), status consumption was adopted from Eastman et al. (1997),

novelty seeking was adopted from Wee et al. (1995), brand conscious was adopted from Nelson & Macleod (2005), attitudes towards luxury brands from Han et al. (2010), and finally purchase intention was adopted from Zeithmal, Berry & Parasuraman (1996) and Baek et al. (2010). The variables and their sources for the measurement scales are presented in Table 4.1.

Variable	Source for measurement	Number of items	Type of variable
Information Susceptibility (IS)	Bearden et al. (1989)	4	Independent
Normative Susceptibility (NS)	Bearden et al. (1989)	8	Independent
Collectivism (C)	Kongsompong, Green & Paterson (2009)	10	Independent
Personal Gratification (PG)	Vinson et al. (1977)	5	Independent
Status Consumption (SC)	Eastman et al. (1997)	5	Independent
Novelty Seeking (NSE)	Wee et al. (1995)	4	Independent
Brand Conscious (BC)	Nelson & Macleod (2005)	6	Independent
Attitude toward luxury brands (ATT)	Han et al. (2010)	9	Mediating
Purchase Intention (PI)	Zeithmal, Berry & Parasuraman (1996) and Baek et al., (2010).	9	Dependent

Table 4.1. Sources of measurement scale items

Seven items of the purchase intention questions were from Zeithmal, Berry & Parasuraman (1996) and three from Baek et al., (2010) with seven Likert scales of agreement. One of these three items (“How likely would you be to purchase this brand?”) Baek et al. (2010) has a different seven Likert scale. Since the scale of this question was “very unlikely/very likely”, and it was not “strongly disagree to strongly agree” scale of the other questions, therefore it was crossed out of the questions.

Reason being the questionnaire needs to be homogeneous both for the respondents and for the analysis with SPSS. Hence, the questions for the purchase intention are nine.

4.3. Defining Quiet and Loud Luxury Brands

The definitions of quiet and loud brands are adapted and extended from Han et al. (2010) and further studied in the Malaysian market to be up to the market standards.

Quiet brands are brands with discreet logo and badges which are not clearly embalmed on the displaying area and are not easily noticeable and distinguishable.

Loud brands have conspicuous logo and signatures, are pretty clear and eye-catching, with visible and recognizable logos.

4.4. Questionnaire Design

This questionnaire is designed in five parts (See table 4.2.). The five parts are Price Recognition, Brand Selection, Luxury Purchase, Purchase Behaviour and Demographic respectively. Table 4.2. explains the details of each section, describe the section with their functions and type of questions.

To make the questionnaire interesting and attractive for the respondents, the first two parts begin with some images of luxury items. The first two sections; price recognition and brand selection, have male and female section in order to guide the respective respondent to the next related parts to each gender.

Since it is not logical to ask men to recognize the price of women's handbags and vice versa, these parts were separated. The first section for females was recognizing the price of three pairs of handbags which were a pair of Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Coach each.

Section	Description	Function	Question Types
Price Recognition (Female section) Part 1	Ranking handbags according to the prices	Recognizing price knowledge	6 handbags once without brand name and once with their brands written
Brand Selection (Female Section) Part 2	Selecting branded items based on preference	Observing the attitudes and preference	3 pairs of handbags and sunglasses with brand names written
Price Recognition (Male section) Part 1	Selecting the most expensive watch	Recognizing price knowledge	Two watches with brand names written
Brand Selection (Male section) Part 2	Selecting branded items based on preference	Observing the attitudes and preference	3 pairs of travel bags, t-shirt and shoes with brand names written
Luxury Purchase (Common Section) Part 3	Selecting favourite brand, frequency of visiting luxury stores and reason for purchasing brands	Observing the thought process before shopping	Multiple choice questions on favourite brands, frequency and purchase motive
Purchase Behaviour (Common Section) Part 4	Purchasing behaviour questions	Measuring the shopping behaviour	Seven Likert Scale of strongly disagree to strongly agree
Demographic (Common Section) Part 5	Characteristics and Demographic	Measuring the characteristics	Questions on, gender, age, education, income, etc.

Table 4.2. Questionnaire design and description

By studying the website of Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Coach, visiting their Kuala Lumpur branches, talking and discussing with their store managers and getting third parties' judgments such as my supervisor, colleagues and friends and top of that doing a pilot test with the selected loud and quiet brands of each bag, the final selection of the bags were made.

There were some criteria in selecting the quiet and loud brands such as brand prominence and several control variables, such as the bags' material and size. For instance the primary materials in bags were fabric (e.g., denim, canvas), leather.

The judgment criteria were to select the items that have the same look and feel, same materials as close as possible to reduce the biasness of the choice of respondents.

The first section of the questionnaire for female starts with six attractive pictures of luxury women handbags from Louis Vuitton, Gucci and Coach both quiet and loud brands of each item. At first, the respondents were asked to rank the pictures according to the prices, while there was no name provided for each item. The second part was the same question and the same pictures, but this time the names of brands were provided and asked them again to rank the handbags according to their prices from one; least expensive, to six; most expensive. It is presumed that respondents who know brands quite well are more accustomed to distinguishing traits of luxury goods and thus can recognize products and their prices without the need for conspicuous brand displays.

In contrast, the respondents who are not familiar with the brands cannot recognize the subtle cues and require loud signals to recognize a brand and the connotations of status. Brand knower; quiet knower, is expected to be more likely to recognize subtle brand cues than the rest of respondents and therefore is less dependent on prominent brand placement to infer the relative price of a luxury handbag or watch. It is expected that the respondents who are unfamiliar with brands to view prestige bags with prominent branding as more expensive than similar bags with delicate and undistinguishable brand cues.

On the other hand, it is expected that the respondents who knows the brands well enough and are familiar with each brand signature to correctly recognize these similar but subtly marked bags for the brand they are and, thus, to properly assess their relative prices. For all of the selected items, quiet brands were more expensive than the loud ones.

The first section of the questionnaire for males starts with two images of watches one Rolex and one Patek Philippe. The respondents were asked to pick out the most expensive item. It is expected that the brand knower is aware that Patek Philippe watch which is a quiet brand and knows its relative price that is more expensive than Rolex. Conversely, the ones who do not know this quiet brand watch assume that Rolex is more expensive.

The next section for females is three similar parts of which asked to select their preferred item between the provided products. It starts with two handbags of Louis Vuitton, one quiet and one loud. It is tried to be the same look and feel to reduce the biasness of the respondents' choice by removing a variable of different look and design. The LV bags are both Speedy 30 handbags from a famous collection which are available on its website. The quiet one is more expensive than the loud one.

The next items of this section are a pair of Prada sunglasses one quiet and one loud item of its updated collection. The last items of the female brand selection are a pair of Chanel sunglasses one quiet and one loud item.

Following the price recognition of watches is the brand selection for the males which is two sets of LV men's travel handbags one quiet and one loud. Next questions are a pair of Prada men's shoes and two Ralph Lauren t-shirts one quiet and one loud each.

In both male and female brand selections it was asked: "Considering having enough money, which one of XYZ do you buy?" The reason for asking such a question is to measure the attitudes of the respondent regardless of his/her financial strength in buying a quiet or loud brand. In the whole sections the loud brands are placed as item A and quiet brands are placed as item B.

Part two which is a common section initiates with asking the respondents favourite brand among the provided brands. Overall, eight brands are studied in this research.

This question follows by asking respondents to choose their visiting frequency of luxury stores and purchase frequency of branded products. These two questions can help to distinguish between a frequent visitor and buyer with non-visitor and non-buyer of branded luxury goods. Eventually, this part ends with questioning the motivations of going to a store for buying a luxury brand, which could be quality of products, brand reputation or etc. The logic behind this question is to understand and realize the purchase motive and push behind purchase intention of a branded item.

Next part; part four, starts with measuring the respondents' knowledge and awareness about their social values, level of their collectivism, consumption motives, personal values and brand conscious as the independent variables, and ended by the dependent variable of purchase intention.

And finally questionnaire ends with part five asking for respondents' demographics including gender, age, marital status, citizenship, country of residence, ethnicity, education, occupation and income.

It is good to point out that the first six questions of part two for both male and female whereby they were asked to pick out between two items of the same brand (one quiet and one loud) targets the respondents' attitudes and preference of purchasing luxury brands are closed-ended questions which respondents can chose only one answer. Selected item images in this section are based on the study done on the websites of each brand. The four luxury brands which are selected here are based on the level of their brand perception in the global market and the country of which the study is done; Malaysia. Based on the Interbarnd 2011 Ranking of the Top 100 Brands; the most reliable and credible source of branding in the world, Louis Vuitton ranked 18 as the first luxury brand with the brand value of 23,172(\$m) by 2011. The three remaining brands are Prada, Chanel and Ralph Lauren.

Since the purpose of this study is to measure the attitudes and preference of consumers in the context of Malaysia toward quiet or loud luxury brands, the questionnaire is designed to start with ranking the handbags from one; least expensive, to six; most expensive, and followed by two images of each brand to select the favourite item of the luxury brands among the provided images. The pictures are as two Louis Vuitton women's handbag, two pairs of Chanel women's sunglasses and two pairs of Prada women's sunglasses followed by men's section with two Louis Vuitton men's travel bags, two pairs of Prada men's shoes, and finally two Ralph Lauren men's t-shirts to pick their favourite items by the consideration of having enough money. Just to recap all pictures of A items are the loud brands, while the B items are the quiet luxury brands to be consistent for the data analysis.

Selections of these pictures were based on studying the latest models of the items on the websites of each four brands, printing the images and comparing the look and feel. To reduce the biasness of the selection process, the products from the same category was chosen. For instance, both of the LV men's travel bags are *Keepall 55*, and both LV women's handbag are *Speedy 30*. The selected items of LV are the latest models launched to the market, by the consideration of having the closest look to eliminate any respondents' selection because of different look and feel rather than the loudness or quietness of the item. The images in this part are in colour and vivid to make sure the visibility of the logs and badges are clearly provided for the respondents.

In part four purchase behaviour 51 questions are provided to measure the information susceptibility, normative susceptibility, personal gratification, status consumption, novelty seeking, brand conscious collectivism and purchase intention respectively based on 7 points Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Section A and B begin by the information susceptibility and normative susceptibility which measure the level of consumer susceptibility to social influence which is the augmentation of one's image in the opinion of significant of others; who could be family, friends and even strangers, by twelve questions.

Section C is Personal gratification which measures the consumer's need for sense of accomplishment, social recognition and the pleasure of having fine things in life by the contribution of five questions.

Section D is the status consumption which measures the level of consumer desirability in consuming status products to demonstrate superiority of status to themselves and to others to command respect, consideration and envy from others by five questions. The questionnaire continues by section E; novelty seeking, asking individuals their curiosity to seek variety and differences by four questions.

Novelty seeking follows by brand conscious in section F through asking six questions to identify the idea that brands play an important role in the psychological process of the consumer which leads to the buying act. In addition, the tendency to give priority to the collective self over the private self is measured in section G; collectivism, in the questionnaire by ten questions.

Lastly, the questionnaire in part four ended with asking nine questions on the intention of the respondent in buying his/her favourite luxury brand.

The last part of the questionnaire; part five, is the characteristics of the respondents asking 9 questions to measure the respondent demographic and study the related connections between "gender, age, marital status, citizenship, education, occupation and income" and "purchasing behaviour of quiet or loud luxury brands".

4.5. Sampling Design

The sampling method of this study is non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling is a technique that the respondents in the population have no likelihood attached to their being chosen as sample subjects. Additionally, to obtain the responses quickly and efficiently, the convenience sampling is selected as the probability sampling type. Convenience sampling is done by gathering data from members of the population who are conveniently available to share it. It should be highlighted that the sampling technique of current paper is according to the consumer's age, ethnic group, education level, occupation, and income level.

4.6. Sample Size

The sample size for this research is followed by Roscoe (1975) as a rule of thumb, sample sizes between 30 and 500 are appropriate for most studies. Roscoe (1975) declares that at 500, sample error will not exceed 10 percent of the standard deviation about 98 percent of the time. Therefore, a minimum sample of 30 from each sub sample will be representative of the whole target population for this study which includes, Malay, Chinese, Indian, Others, SPM/STPM, Diploma, Bachelor, Masters, etc. For the purpose of this study the minimum sample had been chosen as 30 and the maximum 300 from Malaysia. However, due to a rather mediocre response rate the actual sample size used in this study as the maximum is reduced to 200.

4.7. Sample Selection

The survey was conducted among residents of Kuala Lumpur in Federal territory of Malaysia. The respondents include both male and female consumers who are eighteen years and above who has the disposable income to purchase. The range of consumers could be students or working professionals from various institutions, organizations, self-employed or even retirees.

4.8. Data Collection

After deciding on the content of the questionnaire, a pilot study is done to make sure that the questions are reliable enough to measure the desired perception and attitudes of the Malaysian consumers towards purchasing quiet and loud luxury brands. Based on the SPSS analysis which is done on the result of the pilot study which was collected from 10 people, some of the questions were eliminated from the main data collection to increase the precision of the study.

Afterwards an electronic questionnaire was constructed using a survey program called “Survey Monkey”. Survey Monkey is a web based application that has been created by a global company named survey monkey which enables users to create, store and share documents they have created using the online word processor, spreadsheet and presentation tools that are available through the website. The efficiency and effectiveness of the electronic questionnaire known as online surveys are not yet to be ignored, to securely and easily share feature with the sample, the users are enabled to collaborate on similar shared documents in real time. Online surveys are known to be easy to administer, can be delivered promptly, can be replied at the respondents’ convenience; inexpensive with a wide reach local and even global audience (global is not applicable in this context, as the researcher is targeting just Malaysian consumers). As a matter of fact, electronic questionnaire can theoretically increase the response rate which is one of the big stumbling blocks when it comes to questionnaire, especially long one like this questionnaire with almost 60 questions.

Since this study aims to understand the purchasing behaviour of shopping luxury brands, shopping mall intercept is also used to collect some shoppers. Two researchers who were blind to the theorizing of quiet and loud luxury brands were contracted to survey the residents of Federal Territory of Malaysia Klang Valley.

This includes visiting two upscale shopping districts known as Midvalley and Pavilion which services all range of shoppers from different sectors of the city. A total number of 41 questionnaires were collected from mall intercept from random shoppers both weekdays and weekends which 40 were complete and qualified for the analysis.

Online survey was distributed among the researcher's workplace and two more sister companies. From the whole online survey a total number of 158 responses were collected which 39 were discarded as of incomplete answers. From University of Malaya Business Graduate School of Business face to face data collection, 33 questionnaires were collected which 2 were discarded. Data collection was performed over a two-week period on both weekend and weekdays. Besides online distribution, the questionnaires were also circulated among colleagues and local friends of the researcher at his workplace. All and all 190 complete responded questionnaires were collected during a two week data collection.

4.9. Data Analysis Technique

To fulfil the objectives of the study, a number of analyses were used on the data obtained from the questionnaire including normality tests, reliability and validity test, factor analysis, and multiple regressions.

