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The Impact of COVID-19 on Luxury Consumption in Tourism to and from Dubai

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Abstract *The global pandemic of COVID-19 has damaged the consumption of luxury products and services, yet the academic interest in luxury tourism shopping remains limited. The purpose of this paper is to fill the gap in tourism literature identifying the untapped potential of luxury consumption in tourism. In this exploratory research, convenient sampling was used to select and interview in-bound and out-bound tourists based in Dubai regarding their luxury shopping behaviour. Thematic analysis was applied to identify factors for comparison between emerging themes. Research findings indicated that luxury consumption is a combination of planned and experiential consumption behaviour as identified from the thematic analysis based on comparison of in-bound and out-bound tourists' luxury shopping behaviour and experiences. Findings of this research provided themes as: perception of luxury shopping in and from Dubai, luxury shopping motivation for tourists before COVID-19 and impact of COVID-19 on luxury tourism shopping. This original study attempts to highlight Dubai as a luxury shopping destination strategizing marketing to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on luxury tourism markets. The research contributes to tourism and marketing literature by identifying comparative factors for in-bound and out-bound luxury tourism markets.*

Keywords: *Luxury Consumption, COVID-19, Tourism, Shopping, Consumer Behaviour*

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 has severely damaged the norms of societies, governments and businesses around the world. COVID-19 as a pandemic has proved to be a hidden enemy that has crumpled financial establishments, business empires and health systems with the last six months. The scariest character of this virus has been the fact that it has not differentiated among people from any race, any country, any age group or any gender. COVID-19 was officially declared as a pandemic affecting the worldwide population by the World Health Organization on March 11th, 2020, triggering a universal health and medical emergency with a health alert across governments and publics (UNWTO, 2020).

The volatility of the COVID-19, as it is still unpredictable after so many months, caused havoc in the financial trade, balance of economies, health and tourism (Haryanto, 2020). This unanticipated threat of COVID-19 has horrified public and private investors resulting in an incredulous economic environment for all international industries. The most severely hit industry by the virus is the tourism industry that was the bloodline of many other global businesses. Evidently, all types of tourism, inviting large numbers of international travellers, have seen an unbelievable plunge in the demand. Since the damage continues, it is still impossible to estimate the unmeasurable loss in the tourism sector accredited to COVID-19. This paper presents a qualitative and exploratory study on the impact of COVID-19 on tourism based on luxury shopping. UAE being the well-known hub of luxury shopping has been selected as the centre to study purchasing decisions of inbound and outbound tourists.

The concept of shopping tourism can be recognized as a progression of outshopping concept from the theory of retailing. "Outshopping is defined as the purchase of goods by consumers outside their local shopping area" (Jarratt, 2000, p. 287). Since the academic recognition of retail marketing, the outshopping behaviour has been exciting researchers focusing on studying the impact of demographic, psychographic and socio-economic factors for outshopping behaviour. (Fiske et al., 2008; Fionda & Moore, 2009; Megehee & Spake, 2012; Okonkwo, 2009).

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Outshopping has been studied with respect to combination of various economics driven elements of retail marketing and tourism marketing (Jarratt, 2000). The global expansion of retail trading areas opens the competition that transformed outshopping into a competition arena for shopping tourism. Jarratt (2000) suggested that income and education were positively correlated with outshopping behaviour, while age and status in society were negatively correlated. Perhaps cultural context was assumed to be global, else, many countries would indicate positive correlation of social status with outshopping.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Luxury Tourism Consumer Motivation

The global trend of outshopping branched out into tourism shopping, which was further stretched into luxury shopping tourism due to growth in accessibility for luxury products (Kapferer, 2012). Previous studies did not consider shopping among the significant reasons as either a holiday activity or travel motivation (Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2012). Around that time there was no understanding of shopping in the tourism industry. As researched by Jansen-Verbeke (1991) this perception of shopping in the field of travel and tourism has emerged.

Tourism motivations are closely related with their purchasing behaviour of tourists. Some studies observed several motivations behind this increasing inclination towards luxury consumption. Motivations derived from individual characteristics include self-actualization, buying for a special occasion, future investment and need for distinctive products (Bianand Forsythe, 2012). Whereas, from social reasons of being influenced by others and for social comparison (Wang et al., 2011; Zhan & He, 2012).

UAE illustrates social consumption motivation theory from which consumers are motivated to purchase highly priced luxury goods to be a part of the affluent culture and receive social recognition (Vel, Captain, Al-Abbas & Hashemi, 2011). Other factors are superior quality, premium pricing whilst delivering customers both extrinsic and intrinsic value (Keller, 2009; Vigneron & Johnson, 2004; Dubois & Laurent, 1994).

Recent literature states that travel motivation is associated with the strategic location of Dubai and closer proximity providing 'experiential luxury'for consumers in Europe, Asia-Pacific and Middle East (Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014; Abtanetal., 2014; Rovai, 2014). Several scholars defined the luxury industry as a consolidated market segment, although luxury offerings vary according to their functional uses, these provide consumers with comparable symbolic and experiential benefits often derived from the brand's intangible attributes (Kapferer & Bastien, 2009; Keller, 2009). In this sense, luxury products provide similar experiential benefits derived from intangible attributes of brands (Okonkwo, 2009). Hence, this study refers to an exclusive category of brands across various productsdifferentiated from one another contributing to consumer-perceived luxury products (Vigneron & Johnson, 2004). It is therefore, critically important to define who the different luxury consumers are, and how they could be segmented geographically, demographically, psychographically and on behavioural characteristics (Roux, Tafani & Vigneron, 2017; Chandon, Laurent & Florence, 2016; Schade, Hegner, Horstmann & Brinkmann, 2016).

Whereas, some studies focused on experiential luxury consumption as influenced by different psychological factors becoming an integral part of lifestyles enhancing the quality of life (Wiedmann et al., 2009; Rovai, 2014; Abtan et al., 2014). As a result, travel motivations increasingly led to demand for luxury products where shopping is perceived as a relevant part during outbound travel experiences and customer's expectations change as a result of their luxury consumption experiences (Johnson et al., 2009; Morgan, Pritchard & Pride, 2002).

Practice of Luxury Shopping Tourism

Having briefly discussed the motivation factors of luxury tourism consumption, the focus can be shifted to the development of luxury shopping tourism in shopping destinations. Cities around the world are marketing themselves as major shopping destinations since postmodern tourists connect retail distinction with tourism destinations choice (Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014; Henderson et al., 2011). Shopping is related with tourist destinations such as Paris and London in Europe, Dubai and Abu Dhabi in the Middle East, Singapore and Hong Kong in Asia as well as Las Vegas in North America (Martens & Reiser, 2017; Correia et al., 2018, Kattiyapornpong & Miller, 2012).

Within the context of tourism industry, luxury industry contributes an increasing portion of global luxury sales where sales are increasing 7% annually (Park et al., 2010; Brochado et al., 2018). A variety of factors arise from this trend of luxury tourism; authenticity and country-of-origin are two most significant ones (Cheah et al., 2016). Hedley (2007) emphasized that country of origin for luxury goods led to expeditious growth in luxury tourism sector. In this regard, global luxury sales are driven by Chinese to a large extent who regularly seek luxury products (Rambourg, 2014).

By comparison, restricting a tourist destination's shopping options would lessen its attractiveness for visitors to stay for longer periods (Sirakaya-Turk et al., 2015) Academic publications recognize Dubai as a powerful example of tourism growthidentifying Dubai as a strong international brand due to successful tourism projects (Seraphim & Haq, 2020).Destinations need to aggressively invest in their luxury tourism facilities in order to remain competitive as luxury touristshave capacity to easily change their destination preferences.

In addition, a study found that visitors typically view Dubai as a luxury shopping destination including presence of high-quality shopping malls, large retail brand portfolio, targeting all age groups, top couture fashion boutiques, special offers or seasonal promotions (Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014; Haneef, Ansari, Bhavani, 2019; Sharpley, 2008). Dubai has creatively marked a breakthrough further reinforced by social and economic factors such as annual shopping festival featuring over 3,000 retail outlets and 40 shopping malls along with leisure entertainment to draw a cosmopolitan based shopping experience for locals and tourists (Alhosani & Zaidan, 2014).

Studies prove that Dubai has emerged on the global tourism map and growth in tourism is strongly linked with luxury and retail (Martens &Reiser, 2017; Anwar & Sohail, 2004). The market-driven approach is associated with cross-border consumption behaviour in the luxury tourism sector (BainD'Arpizio et al., 2017). Early studies reflected that for specific product categories such as luxury cars, fashion apparel and leather goods; consumption behaviour will not vary as luxury brands cater to cross-cultural behaviour (Dawar & Parker, 1994). For this region, Chinese customers account for 10 per cent of sales of Chalhoub's luxury brands, in 2019 about 3.68 million Chinese travelled to Dubai (Kamel, 2020).

Concerning tourist shoppers' contribution to consumer markets due to global availability and acceptance of luxury brands, their strategic appeal benefits from its global positioning as consumers from different countries develop similar needs and tastes (Ozsomer & Simonin, 2004). A major implication of the market driven approach of luxury brands is emergence of a new market space referred to as 'the Sixth Continent' (The Economist, 2014). Initially this term was applied to airport's duty free shopping are as those exposed to massive number of travellers due to their nature of captive market space (Rovai, 2014). Hence it can be stated that Dubai is a part of the sixth continent factor.

For luxury goods business, the duty free areas are a 'learning market space' in identifying customer attitude and behaviour in foreign international markets to strategize their competitive positioning. This concept can further extend to all shopping areas attracting travellers including fashion districts, malls and luxury designer outlets (Rovai, 2014). This study further supports the argument how western luxury brands use culture specific ways to address Chinese shoppers with luxury brands flagship stores like Louis Vuitton coming out with a handbag collection inspired by the Chinese new year symbol to attract tourists around the holiday season.

Furthermore, there is an obvious gap in literature on health pandemics impacting the luxury tourism industry. Some researchers have investigated the effect of health crisis occurred in the past such as, Severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) the short lived pandemic having similar origins of transmissions as COVID-19. When we review the literature, not enough credible publications reflect direct influence of SARSon luxury tourism; hence their approach in general markets has been recognized (Fleck, 2003; Day, Mckay, Ishman & Chung, 2004).

Across Middle East, the luxury personal goods market continues to grow as reported by Bain & Company (Hodgson, 2019), by the year 2025 the market is expected to grow 3 per cent to 5 per cent; however, the recent economic and political events are expected to reshape the industry. Whereas, in UAE according to luxury retailer Chalhoub Group, "The bright side is once this virus is contained, the UAE and Dubai will be much faster to recover and capture back the Chinese customers," says founder Mr Chalhoub (Kamel, 2020).

METHODOLOGY

The COVID-19 crisis has been discussed regarding its impact in other industries, but it has not been examined, explored or discussed to a great extent within the luxury tourism perspective. Therefore, the methodological approach was mapped with the exploratory rather than conformational aspect of the research. Due to the study's exploratory nature, a qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate for reaching reliable findings based on interviews with luxury buyers residing in, or visiting Dubai. Critical realism presented the relevant ontological basis for the qualitative study, as it indicates that the world does not depend on words that describe them, that the essential characteristics of the world are comprehensible, and that the world is a structured open system (Fu, 2011).

Research Problem and Objectives

This research acknowledges the core research problem regarding the luxury tourism in Dubai being the influence of COVID-19. This paper attempts to fill the research gap identified in the literature on tourist luxury consumption at the time of COVID-19 pandemic. To achieve this, the research issues were discussed by asking a set of questions from different types of respondents based in Dubai: outbound tourists from Dubai and inbound tourists to Dubai, travelling for luxury consumption. The predominant research question standout as "what is the impact of COVID-19 on luxury consumption in tourism to and from Dubai".

Sample and Source for Collection

Non-probability sampling technique is accepted to be suitable for exploratory studies (Lincoln &Guba, 2003). The sampling criteria for this study were specific and the researchers were explicit about the people to be interviewed, therefore purposive and convenient sampling was used and the number of respondents were decided based on the availability factor. The purposeful or judgment sampling is a conscious choice as the researchers interviewed the participants according to the needs of the study, that were of interest and best able to answer the research questions (Bernard, 2002). It is typically used in qualitative research to identify and focus on richness of, rather than quantity of the data, for proper utilization of resources at hand (Patton, 2002).

The above-mentioned research objectives were handled by conducting direct interviews with both inbound and outbound luxury buyers.This study looked for a diverse selection of participants in luxury tourism based on travel experience, age and gender due to consumers belonging to various cultural backgrounds associated with Dubai.

A research instrument in the form of interview schedule was developed that sought to obtaincredible information. The data relevant to the goals of this research by following a pre-set criterion: they had to be inbound or outbound tourists having visited Dubai to determine the nature of the respondent's engagement with luxury. The interviews were conducted through Zoom and/or face-to-face in informal and social settings by the researchers to facilitate discussion with respected respondents. All responses were evaluated independently and findings were reconciled after the data analysis by the authors.

The authors ensured that all interviewed individuals provided adequate information and contribution to meet the research objectives set for this paper. Consequently, criterion of saturation was deployed to conclude the sample size after a detailed understanding of the different related viewpoints of the study was developed (Alam, 2005). This being an exploratory study, respondents also had the ability to explore other factors that may have influenced their purchasing behaviour in a more open-ended way. The aim was to gain additional insights that would indicate wider views on luxury consumption in tourism and bridge the gap between different countries.

Following research questions were used to both inbound and outbound tourists in the direct and virtual interviews:

RQ1. Please discuss why you chose to do luxury shopping when travelling to or from Dubai?

RQ2. What types of products or services, and why, you buy as luxury shopping?

RQ3. What features or benefits attract/motivate you to travel to or from Dubai for luxury shopping?

RQ4. What aspects of your luxury shopping experience linked to tourism have changed due to Covid-19 and Why?

Data Analysis and Coding

For effective data collection, the parameters of luxury were broadened concluding that shopping of luxury goods varies for different destinations to and from Dubai. The methodological approach of thematic analysis was adopted based on themes and behaviour patterns (Aronson, 1994). Theme based method of data coding was used for the data collection as a result of the listed research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The process of coding was part of the analysis and derived from responses received from respondents; as items of data were organized into related clusters (Tuckett, 2005).

Data Codes related to research questions were formed, the patterns emerged identifying underlying themes that led to comparison of inbound and outbound luxury tourist consumer categories (Percy, Kostere & Kostere, 2015). The respondents were coded and separated as LTI (Luxury Tourist Inbound) and LTO (Luxury Tourist Outbound). Since purchasing decisions are subjective, direct participant quotes were used to support the rationale for each theme. The handling and sorting of the data thus made it easy to identify emerging primary and secondary themes (Belotto, 2018). All respondents were university educated and affluent, with a mix of age groups and genders. The comparison of buying behaviour based on education, age groups and genders is beyond the purpose and scope of this paper.

Table 1: Characteristics of Luxury Tourists Outbound (LTO) based in Dubai

Outbound Participant no.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Current Occupation
LTO-1	Female	24	Canadian	Marketing Executive
LTO-2	Female	25	British	Web Designer
LTO-3	Male	28	Pakistani	Influencer/Brand Endorser
LTO-4	Female	30	Indian	Influencer/Blogger
LTO-5	Female	35	Canadian	Makeup Artist
LTO-6	Female	32	Emirati	Housewife

Outbound Participant no.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Current Occupation
LTO-7	Male	34	American	Self-employed manager of PR agency
LTO-8	Female	45	Thai	House wife
LTO-9	Male	44	Pakistani	IT Engineer
LTO-10	Female	42	Pakistani	House wife
LTO-11	Male	35	Pakistani	Software Manager

Table 2: Characteristics of Luxury Tourist Inbound (LTI) based Overseas

Inbound Participant no.	Gender	Age	Nationality	Current Occupation
LTI-1	Female	24	Canadian	Graphic Designer
LTI-2	Female	33	Pakistani	Consultant
LTI-3	Female	28	Pakistani	Self-employed manager of Tourism Operator Agency
LTI-4	Female	31	Canadian	Analyst
LTI-5	Female	25	British	Brand Co-Ordinator
LTI-6	Female	33	American	Dermatologist
LTI-7	Male	34	Pakistani	Self-employed manager of Tourism Operator Agency
LTI-8	Male	46	British	Finance Manager
LTI-9	Male	40	Canadian	IT Consultant
LTI-10	Female	36	French	Design Thinking Expert

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The inbound and outbound tourists interviewed areresiding in or visiting Dubai, discussed the impact of the pandemic on their travels for luxury shopping. Themes emerging from interviews based on direct quotes of the tourists are explained below.Table 1 presents the sample profile, indicating that respondents were mostly educated to tertiary level and in professional occupations. Previous studies indicate that luxury consumption is impacted by demographic factors such as gender, age, education and income,thus, participants for interviews were selected based on this (Sun, 2010; Shukla, 2008). For the comparison purpose, respondents were separated into two groups LTI (Luxury Tourist Inbound) and LTO (Luxury Tourist Outbound).

Perception of Luxury Shopping in Dubai

The data analysis started with the discussion on respondent's self-definitions of a luxury brand shopping as key characteristic of luxury fashion. "Luxury is not for everyone, something you can't afford all the time, most people don't have it" (LTO-2). At the same time for others "Premium price is luxury to me, what classifies a product as a luxury" (LTO-4). Further, one respondent made an explicit comparison with a high-street fashion brand "H&M clothing doesn't appeal to me, it is something not my style, but when I came to know designer Balmain was collaborating with them, I knew this collection will be iconic and sold out in seconds" (LTO-3). This is an example of brand building for a sub-scale luxury label like Balmain attracting H&M customers. A respondent bought luxury product only for others, "I don't believe in luxury brands, I travel and buy luxury items only for my family" (LTO-9). Contrarily, "for me a luxury brand signifies the quality"(LTO-10).

Particularly for leather goods, sunglasses and fine watches you can find price points lower than what is paid in your home country depending on fluctuation of the currency.Most participants stated that authenticity of brands specifically when buying from the same country as brand of origin and less fear of counterfeit products is perceived highly significant for luxury brands. A tour operator narrated, "Our clients request to organize shopping destinations as part of their trip and stop over at Cartier or Hermes stores at The Dubai Mall just so the store smells beautiful and we end up buying something for ourselves also" (LTI-7)."I love to travel to cities famous for luxury brands as the experience of shopping is as luxurious as the purchase" (LTO-8). LTI-10 had a different perspective, "French people do not buy luxurious French brands as they are too expensive for us, I travel to buy superior brands of dates and chocolates like 'Bateel' from Dubai". Likewise, "Thai people do not buy luxury Thai Silk like Jim Thompson brand, only tourists buy it, I also buy for my friends in Dubai" (LTO-8).

A new idea that emerged from the discussion was "Duty Free" shopping opportunities, being considered as bargain while searching for luxury goods that are no longer sold in stores or sold out worldwide. Having access to exclusive products, different product selection from what they see at home or more taxed luxury goods. Excessive tax on imported luxury brands further increases the price of luxury goods “The same Louis Vuitton handbag is priced 3x more in Pakistan than what it is in Dubai. You can buy two things for the price of one item”(LTI-2). Another example, another respondent indicated his understanding: “Duty-free is no tax airport area that I really like; I know the price in my country and comparatively cheaper than my own country” (LTO-2). Furthermore, “I buy all luxury brands during my travels from airports [duty free shops] as they are genuine and convenient” (LIT-8). This leads to impulsive purchases and comes across as affordable luxuries when you feel more comfortable shopping around.

It was observed that some individuals browse through duty-free shops to finish the leftover currency as they depart. One interesting point, “I have a close relationship with my sales assistant in the Louis Vuitton store in Heathrow airport, I have the option to book orders in advance and pick them as soon as I book my tickets” (LTO-5). The preferred location of luxury good purchases is clear that for some products respondents have either a preference from a foreign country bought by themselves or having someone buy on their behalf. Luxury watches like Rolex, Hublot are preferred to buy overseas “I can’t afford to travel for luxury goods but my friends can, I always handover my wish-list” (LTO-1).

Luxury Purchasing Motivationfor Tourists Pre-COVID-19

The discussion from both inbound and outbound tourist groups reflected similar responses when it comes to motivation behind luxury shopping. When questioned about this proposition, the respondents did not hesitate to accept that “social recognition” was a key factor in the luxury purchasing process. “For me it’s important that people know this is an expensive outfit, dressing up in luxury brands makes a good impression” (LTO-1). Some local Emirati respondents thought that status seeking is significant and greater the need for a higher social status the greater the need for luxury buying. This purchasing motivator was also found among South Asians (Indians and Pakistanis) raised in Dubai as compared to overseas Pakistan is buying luxury goods for more personal reasons.

A reference was made “The products I buy should match up to my profession and how I want to be seen in the society” (LTO-3).Another respondent added “I like being the centre of attention and being talked about, it gives me a sense of achievement that I am important” (LTI-6). Similarly, (LTO-11) declared, “I only buy watches worth more than 10,000 (US$ 2500) Dirhams, such brands are worth wearing for me”. These young individuals are insecure in their own identity and use luxury goods as means to “showing off” as the reason of such motivation may be cultural. This idea is linked to establishing social connections at workforce common among young employees aiming to achieve personal growth and career goals.

While it is essential for others to recognize the purchased brand as “luxury” respondents also want to heighten their social status, “I feel good when I am the first one to carry the latest Dior handbag that everyone is on a waiting list for”(LTO-2). Also, “Canadians are not much into luxury brands, I buy my special brands from Dubai to impress my friends there [in Canada]” (LTI-9). This finding is consistent with luxury brands that deliver limited collections seasonally, that many of the respondents are fully informed about through social media and influencers bringing this exclusivity. Dubai based fashion and lifestyle blogger stated “Many of my followers love my style and always look up to me because they find my taste to be trendy yet unique from others. This is why I invest spending on luxury products more than high-street brands” (LTO-4).

Although peers, appeared to be the reference group in the purchase decision of luxurious possessions “I will say my girlfriends influence me the most they love to go window shopping at these luxury stores and we often compare prices from different places” (LTO-5). External family relatives also played a normative role in shaping opinion, “I buy luxury brands to gain social approval from my family back home” (LTI-5). “I am known as a luxury buyer in my family, actually I am inspired by my sisters living in Canada and UK” (LTO-10). All of the inbound consumers undoubtedly agreed that they likely to make luxury purchases as it was a reflector of their “wealth”. One respondent even planned their holidays around the time of new product launches “I make sure I’m in Dubai when the new I-phone is coming out, their customer service is excellent and the assurance of authentic product is so much better than Pakistan” (LTI-7). “Diamonds and Gold is so much cheaper than what you pay for in the UK and get value of real gold in Dubai” (LTI-5).

Moreover, self-indulgence is part of a self-gifting act of shopping where luxury brand may be perceived as a luxurious experience related to purchasing decision as a result of positive mood, or private sales “Keeping a track of items that I can’t afford at full price and buy in sales” (LTO-4). Participants also bought gifts for themselves due to special events. Whereas, “I reward myself with luxury goods every now and then especially on holidays” (LTI-1). Thus, these purchases are high involvement which are planned, pre-determined and rarely impulsive “When I travel to Dubai, I admired ladies carrying around the classic Chanel, so I allowed myself an expensive bag”

(LTI-3). Most respondents indulged in designer brands knowing they do not compromise on quality and comfort "I trust luxury products heritage and craftsmanship"(LTO-7).

COVID-19 and Tourists Consumption of Luxury Brands

Beyond the physical constraints of COVID-19, this study indicates that luxury brands might lose their appeal for brand loyal consumers as consumption patterns evolve. In other words, the strong uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 has changed consumer attitudes, behaviour and purchasing habits for the luxury brands. For example, "on my last trip to Thailand, I did not even think of buying big brands due to the uncertainty" (LTO-8). "When people are uncertain of surviving this health crisis, how could they be looking for expensive items" (LTO-9)?

The current study supports past research that the physical surrounding and personal attention of luxury stores in Dubai attracts overseas consumers. If shoppers are travelling and shopping for premium price brands in return the respondents expect to receive exclusive and premium service. "I feel important and rich when I walk into a luxury store and buy"(LTO-3). Some even went on to mention how the customer service negative attitude can be a huge miss making you feel unwelcomed which was experience by a client. "It is not the same exciting feeling anymore, I don't feel comfortable doing window shopping" (LTO-2). "If they can't help me choose the product and make me wait for my sales assistant, I will just immediately walk out and go to the next brand in Dubai Mall" (LTI-1). "Buying exclusive brands from Dubai gives value, but the service quality does not match This was reference to The Fashion Avenue extension in Dubai Mall featuring world's largest selection of luxury brands.

The crisis is fundamentally changing how and what consumers buy as it has centred towards basic needs and people shop more consciously that involves e-commerce. As a result, the luxury consumer goods industry dependent on tourist shoppers' segment has massively been affected as travel restrictions widen worldwide to contain spread of COVID-19. For most respondents, working from home due to social distancing has led to a decline in their income which means fewer options to spend money "Once the UAE government announced reopening of malls, maintaining the safety of customers, I stepped out only to buy the necessities and having to browse around luxury stores now seems impossible"(LTO-1). During the discussion about buying habits in the previous six months indicated that luxury goods require greater financial commitment (for example, smartphones, perfumes, cosmetics, jewellery, handbags, shoes) that were highly desirable but remain unnecessary to survive the pandemic."Luxury shopping is least of my concerns right now, I am grateful for having a job and supporting my family" (LTI-4). Also, "Living in Paris, and seeing people dying, it will be heartless to think of special brands" (LTI-10). This statement emphasizes on how the economic fallout has taken a toll on purchasing power.

(LTO-6) nevertheless confessed: "I want to get back to doing normal things and COVID-19 increased my online shopping definitely, the application Ounass provides delivery within 2 hours which is very convenient". Ounass the Middle East first luxury e-commerce brand hosts a variety of designers and luxury fashion brands with exclusive delivery option. COVID-19 is plunging luxury brands into digital sales and to offset the tremendous losses suffered different channels have been established "Under the lockdown, I received a SMS from Louis Vuitton of their first ever online service in Dubai. They even came out with a LV face mask now that I got myself waitlisted on because we all know COVID-19 is here to stay" (LTO-3).

Moreover, the re-opening of retail outlets and loosening of lockdown orders have introduced the new normal. Being forced under lockdown has allowed consumers to re-think their spending patterns where "Because there is no overseas travel, I have reduced my shopping to a great extent" (LTO-7). In effect, "Work trips are not happening anymore, this means no luxury shopping until next year, I might consider travelling safe again once the vaccine is out" (LTI-6). The tourism business sector is attuned to massive implications and challenge of operating for example owner of tourism agency revealed "Our business suffered the most since we are in travel industry and we need to follow the protocol from Emirates for travel, even though Dubai healthcare system is one of the safest, our clients are not convinced travelling in groups" (LTI-3).

The review of all interviews and the discussion of findings in this research indicate that the COVID-19 has redefined luxury shopping comparatively for both inbound and outbound tourist consumer groups. Hence, the data revealed that luxury goods industry is facing unprecedented challenges in order to respond to the pandemic, they need to design experiences around consumer lifestyle and e-commerce.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The major limitation of this research is Dubai implemented intense COVID-19 lockdown system requiring an online permit to go outside regardless of any reason. The research based on impact of COVID-19 faced the fundamental challenge of identifying, locating and contacting reliable participants. Owing to the related threat of COVID-19, a limited number of participants were available at the time of the study abiding by the UAE's laws designed to prevent spread of COVID-21. To manage this limitation, all participants were taken into confidence and committed for the research objective and assured that the purpose was purely for academic excellence.

The findings of this study lacked generalizability to the much larger UAE market which led to recognition of another limitation. That being mentioned, it should be noted that findings from this exploratory qualitative research are constrained by a restricted sample size: 21 participants for inbound and outbound tourist's luxury purchasing decisions. It is intuitively rational to expect the older female counterparts would be less interested, while the young women forming majority of our sample have an all-consuming interest in luxury.

CONCLUSION

The qualitative study concludes with identifying factors emerging as impact COVID-19 on tourism for luxury consumption. This paper has presented from its findings based on direct interviews with 21 inbound and outbound tourists buying luxury brands. The research explored the demand side of luxury tourism to and from Dubai affected by COIVD-19. The findings of this paper advocate that luxury brands should place their digital engagement at the centre of their business model, anticipate shifts in consumer sentiment and purchasing decision and manage strength of the supply chain. The themes emerging from the data analysis were: perception of luxury shopping in and from Dubai, luxury shopping motivation for tourists before COVID-19 and impact of COVID-19 on luxury tourism shopping.

This paper encourages further study and agree that there are multiple questions that are necessary for further exploitation. A quantitative analysis is proposed as a potential future direction involving a broader sample of inbound and outbound tourists. A further qualitative study is also suggested to be conducted with the supply side, where luxury tourism providers could be engaged.

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