

## Peculiarities of Consumers' Behavior in the Context of Luxury Goods

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### Abstract

Peculiarities of consumers' behavior in the context of luxury goods are analyzed in this research seeking to distinguish what factors influence usage of luxury goods and what peculiarities characterize consumers' of luxury goods behavior. Three main models of consumers' behavior of luxury goods were distinguished during analysis of theoretical literature and later verified by the qualitative and quantitative analysis. It was found that two usage types are most commonly met in the context of luxury goods usage: "life style" of luxury goods usage based on inner motivation and reaction peculiarities of interaction with the social environment. It was determined that usage of luxury goods is significantly related to satisfaction of inner needs of the personality; these needs are the main factor stimulating usage of luxury goods. Peculiarities of luxury goods and sales environment also significantly influence usage of luxury goods. The raised hypothesis that inner needs of the personality mostly motivate usage of luxury goods was proved.

**Key words:** consumers' behavior, luxury goods, usage model, typologization of consumers.

### Introduction

**Research problem.** Consumers' behavior in a wide sense is the reflection of the socio-cultural processes happening in society: usage is perceived as the process happening in a particular net of the social, cultural and economic practices and reflecting the dominant ideology (Rubavičius, 2003). Though usage is satisfaction of the needs and wishes of the individual, however, the needs and wishes are generated by the lack of illusion created by the cultural economy in post-modern society including Lithuania. Thus, the needs and their satisfaction while purchasing goods or services become striving for a higher level of living, and the process itself reflects the of designing ways of social individual identity (Baudrillard, 2000). Purchasing and possession of wealth become not only a functional fixation of a social status, but the expression of individual life style fulfilling emotional

pleasure (Giddens, 2005). When incomes of people rise, the emotional value of goods gains a growing importance, consequently, goods of a socially stratified emotional shade are bought more frequently. Luxury goods compared to other groups of goods are distinguished by a more expressed symbolic meaning in regard to the hierarchy of the standard of life or prestige. That gives a particular fetishism shade to luxury goods (Baudrillard, 2000), and their consumers are awarded symbolic superiority compared to consumers of other groups of goods.

Three opinions are distinguished in theoretical aspect of consumers' behavior of luxury goods (Černevičiūtė, 2003). The first is utilitarian and proposes that usage of luxury goods performs the function of social status fixation, and the second, individualistic, states that such demonstrative usage is motivated only by personal needs and depends little on the social and economic environment. The third, classical, opinion queries the former two and proposes that that purchasing of luxury goods is influenced by both external (social) and internal (of personality) factors. However, it is not clear how much the demonstrative function influences consumers' behavior of luxury goods and how much it is influenced by personality needs.

**Research relevance** is grounded on these arguments: 1) postmodernist conceptions of a symbolic usage effect in Lithuania 2) utilitarian context of the consumer environment; 3) insufficiency of research on consumers' behavior of luxury goods in Lithuania.

Postmodernist world's culture is the consumer culture, in which goods become self-expression instruments, enabling to designing the personality. In the society of Lithuania there is an increasing variety of consumer behavior forms, evidenced by the usage aspect of luxury goods not only as the attributes of the material culture of the social status but also the unusual demonstrative usage of funds, status mediation, etc. Consumers' behavior of luxury goods is little studied in Lithuania. Elitism usage and its relation to social economic processes in society were ana-

lyzed by I. Matonytė (2001). Sociological aspects of usage, such as demonstration of the social status and position were analyzed by V. Leonavičius (2002). V. Rubavičius (2003) revealed the cultural anthropologic factors of usage as the result of a more cultured economy. J. Stankevičienė (2004) analysed the peculiarities of the consumers' behavior, reflecting in the context of usage of goods under the conditions of Lithuania. The demonstrative sense of usage was analyzed by J. Černevičiūtė (2003; 2006).

**Problematic questions of the research:**

1. What factors influence usage of luxury goods?
2. What peculiarities characterize consumers' behavior of luxury goods?

The raised problematic questions let to form **the subject of the research** – peculiarities of consumers' behavior of luxury goods.

**The aim of the research** is to reveal peculiarities of consumers' behavior of luxury goods.

The aim of the research identified the following **research objectives**:

1. To reveal the content of the consumer's behavior on the grounds of literature, distinguishing the main factors mentioned in studies, that influence usage of luxury goods.
2. To identify factors by the way of operationalization, have influence on consumers' behavior of luxury goods.
3. To identify and present the characteristics of consumers' behavior of luxury goods.
4. To single out the main types of consumers of luxury goods revealing the most characteristic features of usage.

**The hypothesis of the research is as follows:** usage of luxury goods is mostly motivated by inner needs of the personality.

The following conceptions of social sciences are regarded as **the basics of methodological research**:

- Empirical reality cognition oriented to problem solving, enabling to recognize, evaluate and analyze life variety in relation to the person operating in it.
- Psychological theories of the personality construct analyzing human behavior in terms of personality needs and presumptions of their fulfillment.
- Sociological discussion of personality formation under modern conditions emphasizing the choice of the life style, creation of life strategy and necessary components.
- Theories on decision making, the model of rational decision making.
- Marketing concepts, emphasizing the functions of the usage motivation and emotional satisfaction.

**Research methods:**

Theoretical, analysis literature.

Comparative, comparative analysis of conceptions, concepts and attitudes.

Empirical, qualitative and quantitative analysis of consumers' behavior of luxury goods.

Statistical, processing of research data applying the method of descriptive statistics of the SPSS software.

**Research object:** people buying luxury goods and living in Šiauliai, Vilnius and Klaipėda cities, 150 respondents and 5 informants of qualitative analysis.

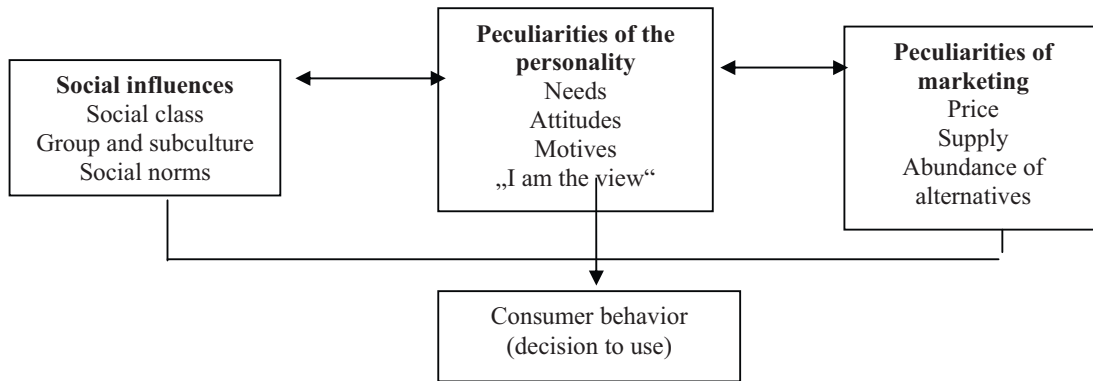
**Characteristics of consumers' behavior of luxury goods and their theoretical grounding**

Usage of luxury goods in the social context is perceived as contrary to daily usage and is defined as usage of wealth and services motivated by infinite desires and wishes, which can be called unessential (Vosiliūtė, 2003). For the first time usage of luxury goods was analyzed in the end of 19<sup>th</sup> c – the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> c. In this analysis two main views were formed which later had influence on all the paradigms seeking to explain consumers' behavior of luxury goods. According to of Canadian economist John Rae and one of the most outstanding economists of the 19–20<sup>th</sup> century Alfred Marshall, prestige usage does not perform any social function, and is motivated only by personal calculations and depends little on the social and economic consumer environment (Černevičiūtė, 2003). In the opinion of the scientists, purchasing of luxury goods is determined by a wish to stand out, which is one of the strongest natural needs of a human being, motivating his/ her behavior from birth to death. The most famous economist Adam Smith and the author of the demonstrative conception Thorstein Veblen declared an other point of view. They proposed that demonstrative (luxurious) usage is determined by specific social – economic conditions, which make this usage essential seeking for a higher status and prestige in society. The conception of **demonstrative usage** became the first classical theory analyzing usage of luxury goods (Giacalone, 2006; Černevičiūtė, 2003; Okonkwo, 2007) (see fig. 1).

According to T. Veblen's "The Theory of the Leisure Class", wealth and possibilities rendered by it are an exclusive symbol, allowing to demonstrate the status in society (Giacalone, 2006). The individual has two basic means to show social superiority in the production society: demonstrative usage of time and wealth. Veblen emphasizes in his theory that demonstrative usage performs a very important social function, identifying and representing the person's status in society. The possibility to spend time leisu-

rely, as it is one of the forms of demonstrative usage, really demonstrates a complicated organization of leisure time, messaging the status superiority. It is evidenced by the knowledge of languages and sophistication of culture things, nurturance of aesthetic skills and so on. Demonstrative lounge is complemented by one more important, aspect the process of demonstrative usage, which is recognized, in society was social prestige, and becomes the main status determinant. The price of goods in demonstrative usage is not only the index of the economic value, but a culturally prominent symbol as well demonstrating the status of the individual. The growing price of goods increases a need of it this is the feature characteristic to it.

This tendency is called the T. Veblen effect (Giacalone, 2006). T. Veblen subsumed not only purchasing of expensive goods and services to the social function of demonstrative usage but education and other aspects of culture as well, which do not have inner or self-contained value, and gain significance only designing the social identity. According to the author of the theory, this social function is distinguished by its universality: individuals of any community feel the need to raise their status, consequently, demonstrative usage is an inevitable result of social evolution. In this regard demonstrative usage can be described as usage of imitation.



**Fig.1.** The model of the demonstrative usage of luxury goods (according to Giacalone, 2006; Černevičiūtė, 2003; Ait-Sahalia et al, 2002)

The canonic conception of imitation by T. Veblen in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was developed distinguishing the “bandwagon” and snob effects of consumers’ behavior of luxury goods (Giacalone, 2006; Černevičiūtė, 2003; Ait-Sahalia et al, 2002).

It is acknowledged that consumers’ behavior of luxury goods can depend on the behavior of other consumers. The “bandwagon” effect represents the tendency that the need of the luxury product increases when this product is used by imitative consumers. And otherwise, the snob effect is evidenced by the decrease of the demand for a luxury product, when other socially inferior consumers start using it.

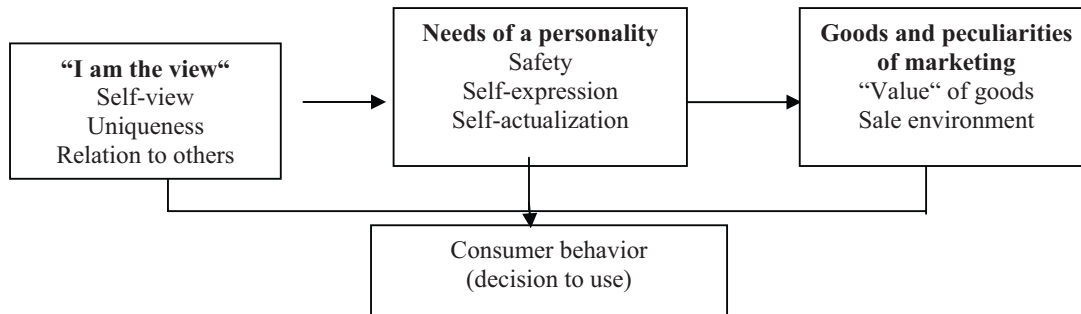
That means that wealth, having gained a consumer degree, loses its social function and cannot represent a high consumer status, it no longer performs the prestige value. Consequently, it is possible to state that *one of the peculiarities of usage of luxury goods is usage oriented to others.*

The other model of consumers’ behavior of luxury goods is **the model of life style**. The concept of the life style outlines a particular way by which the consumer realizes his/ her needs and desires selecting products best corresponding to his/ her world-view. In this instance usage becomes mechanism representing the design of the personality (Giacalone, 2006)

(see Figure 2). Usage now becomes a sort of expanded “I”: wealth, property, expensive things become a part of the “I” conception: “I am I perform the action for the reason to present myself in the desired things <...> Different levels of pleasure related to different forms of self-presentation can fortify individual preferences to use a particular model of clothes, a brand but not the other one. In the course of time some particular choice models can appear through repetitions and habits...” (Černevičiūtė, 2006, p. 20–21). Usage of luxury goods as a life style often expands to the concept of “the art of living”, representing the ability to have the best of the advantages and possibilities rendered by life (Giacalone, 2006). The motto “Create, Excel, Delight” of such lifestyle reflects a relatively hedonistic lifestyle seeking to find and try sensations unattainable for others based on personal ingenuity and oneness. Luxury goods become the way to award oneself: “the real value of luxury goods is not what you buy but what you deserve. So, their price is not a price – that is a reward” (Maruani, 2007, p. 37). Research carried out by the French Comité Colbert Association uniting more than 50 firms selling luxury goods, shows that usage of luxury good based on the lifestyle lets to fulfill the highest social and personal needs of the individual: self-expression,

self-realization, enchantment, etc. (Catry, 2003). It is possible to note one distinct feature in this process: luxury products have meaning; they belong to definite system, complementarium of the products (Černevičiūtė, 2006). Such a system of products called the consumer asterism lets to identify and demonstrate one's lifestyle. For example, presently widely spread in Europe and the USA the lifestyle of young work addicts called *Yuppie* is identified by such products as

Rolex watches, BMW cars, Gucci suitcases, French mould cheese "Bra" and white "Domaine de Pialentou" wine (Hertzberg, 1990). In such a way the lifestyle generates a relative feeling of freedom including the freedom to make consumer decisions in the society influenced by education, experience and personal choices (Baumanas, 2007). Usage of luxury goods becomes the mean of self-creation, and the luxury product serves as the signature of a person.



**Fig. 2.** The model of "lifestyle" luxury goods usage (prepared according to Giacalone, 2006; Černevičiūtė, 2003; 2006)

Usage of luxury goods is also promoted by the **commodity fetishism**. It is perceived as attribution of particular symbolic meanings and values to brands. The goods value covers not only the economic value grounded by the price but the symbolic, grounded by the fantasy, emotions, perception, needs, etc. of the individual as well (Rubavičius, 2003). In such a way the goods *gains* not only *the value*, but *become the value itself*. In this case the following aspects related to luxury goods are important (Catry, 2003):

- **Non-editioning.** The commodity must not be of wide usage, difficulties in gaining it increase the value of the commodity.
- **Uniqueness.** Difference from other products increases interest. The more unique the commodity is, the more exclusive its owner feels.
- **Superiority translation.** One of the basic needs of a human being is the objective of superiority. Possession of a luxury thing increases superiority of an individual.
- **The quality.** The quality usually is the synonym of luxury and increases the value of the product.
- **The price.** A high cost reflects not only the financial possibilities of a purchaser but represents his/her importance as well. So, the sum of money, spent to purchase the product is one of the most important attributes of usage.
- **Notoriety of the brand.** The wider the brand is known, the bigger stimulus to purchase the product of this brand is: the label has the value of prestige.

- **Moral satisfaction.** That is the return value based on the attitude or behavior increasing the fulfillment of self-expression need of the owner of the luxury commodity.

As research performed in the USA shows, the commodity fetishism is increasingly spreading in the layers ascribable to the middle class (Danet, 2005). If until 1990 the average annual income of the consumers of luxury goods (jewelry, designer clothes and exclusive cars) were about \$ 200 000, so during the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century more than 40% of luxury goods were bought by people having the annual income from \$ 55 000 to \$ 85 000. According to J. Baudrillard (2000), the luxury commodity becomes the artificial substitute, which is nothing short of the attribute of the spreading narcissistic behavior more and more replacing social identification. When the difference between social classes and layers vanishes, usage starts growing, so possession of exclusive luxury things lets stand out from the crowd.

In summary, it is possible to distinguish three main models of consumers' behavior of luxury goods: *demonstrative usage*, *usage as lifestyle* and *usage promoted by the commodity fetishism*. These models of different social nature perform one common function: they let to identify the individual and to design one's own personality while experiencing satisfaction through usage of luxury goods. Herewith, usage of luxury goods fulfills social and personal needs of the individual, so it is attributed to the function of social importance.

## Typologization of consumers of luxury goods

It is possible to typologize consumers of luxury goods grounding on different criteria: the level of consumers' activity, psychographic parameters, models of consumer behavior, etc. (Dubois et al, 2002). It is emphasized by research that the personality of the consumer is only one of the factors typologising the consumer characteristics: there is always in process consumer links to the environment also influencing consumer choices. With reference to the values and lifestyle of the consumer, it is possible to distinguish four main types of consumers of luxury goods: 1) type of need; 2) type of external motivation; 3) type of internal motivation; 4) integrated type:

- **Type of need** essentially reflects the characteristics of demonstrative usage. Usage of luxury goods is the mean of social stratification allowing for a particular consumer to inform the people around about his/her social status and sustain it. The luxury goods are the attributes emphasizing his/her status. The main motive to buy the product is usage of it in the same social layer as the particular consumer. The product may not fully fulfill the personal needs of the consumer.
- **Type of external motivation** in usage of luxury goods represents consumer behavior of the commodity fetishism, which can be evidenced by the fashion, prestige translation and so on. Imitation or bandwagon effect is characteristic to this type of consumers: the need to have the same thing as the people of his/her level. The biggest motive to use is the cost of the product and the brand prestige.
- **Type of inner motivation** reflects the inner needs of the personality, such as self-expression, self-realization, and self-actualization and so on. Usage of luxury goods fulfils the "I" conception of the personality and is one of the lifestyle attributes. Most often such usage is internalized during the early socialization, so it is natural and acceptable for the individual as it corresponds his/her morality and the value system.
- **Integrated type** outlines usage of luxury goods influenced by the interaction of different motives, including the accidentals. It is more typical of impulsiveness, having little information about the product and a fast decision to buy. However, if the luxury product raises a positive reaction of the consumer (satisfaction with the quality, enchantment of the people around and so on), it is likely that usage of luxury goods may repeat.

## Research methodology and presentation of the research instrument

Analysis of literature sources and quantitative and qualitative analysis methods were used for research on con-

sumers' behavior of luxury goods.

A **quantitative** research method covers collection of digital information on the grounds of the appropriate control system and data statistical analysis. V. Žydzūnaitė (2001) distinguishes the following features of quantitative analysis:

- a) the research is started from the foreseen in advance explanation of conceptions based on intuition;
- b) it is found upon the structured procedures and formal instruments while gathering the information;
- c) information is gathered controlling the surveyed;
- d) the digital information is analyzed using statistical procedures.

The quantitative analysis method is superior as it lets to gather a huge amount of information about the investigated phenomenon in a relatively short time and with conditionally low expenditures. Usually such research is used when it is sought to gather information from a particular population taking into account the occurrence and distribution of the investigated phenomenon and the relations among the variables.

The survey method was used in this particular research. That a written is survey of respondents giving them the question bloc of the set structure (Kardelis, 2007). On the grounds of analysis of the scientific literature a theoretical hypothetical model of the peculiarities of consumers' behavior of luxury goods was formed basing on which the questionnaire was designed seeking to reveal the peculiarities of consumers' behavior of luxury goods.

Questions to reveal the conception of luxury were prepared on the grounds of the theories of T. Veblen (Giacalone, 2006; Černevičiūtė, 2003; Okonkwo, 2007). The list of luxury goods was formed according to the categories of luxury goods of J. F. Engel et al (1995). The questions study the peculiarities of usage of luxury goods revealing the principles of usage, purchasing behavior, requirements for the purchasing environment and reaction while using. They were prepared on the grounds of the scientific publications of D. Dubois and S. Czellar (2002), J. A. Giacalone (2006).

Two complex blocs of statements were presented to perceive the luxury conception of the research participants, with the help of which it was tried to determine social features of luxury goods and identity goods, which the research participants attribute to luxury goods. Using the Likert scale, the opinion of respondents was measured in the system of 5 points, where absolute approval of the statement was evaluated by 2 points, partial agreement – 1 point, partial disagreement – 1 point and absolute disapproval was evaluated by 2 points, absence of opinion was equ-

ated to 0. In such a way rating of every statement could range in the scale from 2 to – 2, a higher rating means higher approval of the statement.

*Description of the research environment.* Quantitative analysis was carried out on the luxury goods and famous brands of upmarket shops “Frank Walder”, “Orsay”, “Pierre Cardin”, situated in the shopping and leisure centers “Akropolis” in Vilnius and Kaunas and in “Aure” in Šiauliai „Tilžė“ shopping and leisure center, trading in interior goods of exclusive quality and design. 150 respondents took part in research. The return of the questionnaires is 96,15%.

SPSS 13.0 programme was applied to *process research data*. Pearson, Spearman’s correlation tests, non-parametric testing, descriptive analysis were also used. The information received during the interview was analyzed by the content analysis method.

**Qualitative** analysis is the process of conception, which is based on individual methodological traditions of people’s social problem investigation. This lets the researcher design a complex holistic picture, analyze different aspects, and properly convey the attitudes of the informants. One of the advantages of qualitative analysis is its naturalisticity. Besides, according to K. Kardelis (2007), qualitative analyses are distinguished for flexibility as they are oriented to interpretation but not measurements; to the process but not a conclusion.

The interview method was used to research consumers’ behavior of luxury goods seeking to receive information from the consumers of luxury goods. In total 5 informants participated in the research recording the interview in a dictaphone. The focused (half structured) interview plan was prepared for the research to single out only the key spheres, however, the order of priority of the questions was not fixed. This research method was chosen for the following reasons:

- unique cases are analyzed: every consumer of luxury goods is different and unique by his/her values.
- flexible way: the researcher having taken into account the circumstances could choose the place, time, duration, etc. of the research.
- bigger control of the researcher: the researcher could influence the procedure of the research.
- is not finally definite: there is no strict structure of the order of priority of the questions, there is a possibility to vary the course of the research.
- possible variations during the research: the direc-

tion of the research could change if new data or force majeure emerges.

- better quality of the contact: the researcher personally communicates with respondents before the research and gains their trust.
- dynamism of the research: it is not possible to foresee precisely the course and results of the research. Some of research data may influence research of others.
- objectivity is preserved: the interview was recorded, then it was stenographed.

Three women and two men living in Vilnius, Kaunas and Šiauliai were interviewed. Having agreed in advance the researcher went to the homes of the informants where the conversation took place. Seeking to safeguard anonymity of the informants, more details of their biographical data were not revealed. Interview recordings, by request of the informants, could be used only for analysis of this particular research.

### **The peculiarities of consumers’ behavior of luxury goods of the basis of research**

Analysis of research results showed that the respondents are tend to disagree that purchasing of luxury goods symbolizes snobbery of a person. This statement got negative rating. The statement that only wealthy people buy luxury goods was evaluated similarly. All other statements got higher or lower positive points. Analysis of their meanings showed that respondents relate to luxury goods the following social features: psychological satisfaction, physical comfort, high quality of production and a corresponding price. Besides, luxury goods give a person prestige and enable to fulfill the needs of self-expression. At the same time luxury goods let stand out from others, however, a person is able to live without them. According to these research results it is possible to state that luxury goods provide a person with physical and psychological comfort, fulfill his/her social needs, and characterize high quality and a corresponding price.

It was found that respondents tend to attribute such goods or services to the group of luxury goods which need large investment and characterize oneness and originality. The evaluation of goods and services in terms of luxury is presented in Table 1. Their list is prepared according to J. F. Engel et al (1995).

**Evaluation of goods and services in terms of luxury (N = 150)**

<b>Goods and services</b>	<b>Estimator average</b>	<b>Standard deviation</b>
New cars BMW, Mercedes, Rolls - Royce	1,9	0,459
Yacht	1,9	0,470
Exotic trips	1,7	0,461
Own modern household in a prestigious place	1,7	0,391
Clothes and shoes made by designers	1,6	0,545
Pieces of arts	1,6	0,392
Authorial jewellery (with precious gems or without them)	1,4	0,553
Watches and other accessories of known firms	1,2	0,542
New cars of other models of Western countries	1,1	0,386
Extreme sports (flying, sailing)	1,1	0,512
Jewellery articles with gems	0,9	0,498
Plastic body beauty operations	0,9	0,465
Flat or cottage of new construction in a prestigious place	0,8	0,480
Natural fur	0,8	0,471
Homestead in a beautiful natural surrounding	0,7	0,511
Product of well known in the world brands	0,6	0,392
Used cars of well known models	0,4	0,593
Homestead in a village	-0,2	0,622
High quality household and computer equipment	-0,2	0,443
Recreation abroad	-0,4	0,534
Exotic animals	-0,6	0,386
Jewellery articles	-1,3	0,514

As it is seen from research results presented in Table 1 respondents tend to attribute brand new BMW, Mercedes and Rolls – Royce cars, yachts, own premises, exotic travels, author’s jewelry, designer production and art pieces to luxury goods. Distinctly rarely new Western cars of other modes, new flats, extreme sport, precious gems, and production of the world-wide brands or plastic body beauty operations are evaluated as luxury. Such goods and services as domestic electric appliances and computers, leisure trips abroad, ordinary jewelry, a place in the countryside are considered as everyday things and not clas- sed to the category of luxury. Statistically significant evaluation differences in respect to gender, age or re- ceivable income were not determined.

The following research results comprise the precondition to state that *goods and services, requir- ing greater investment than obtained steady income, distinguishing in social prestige and unique, original features are attributed to the luxury category*. These goods let us feel psychological satisfaction or give physical comfort and guarantee expression of high so- cial status in public space.

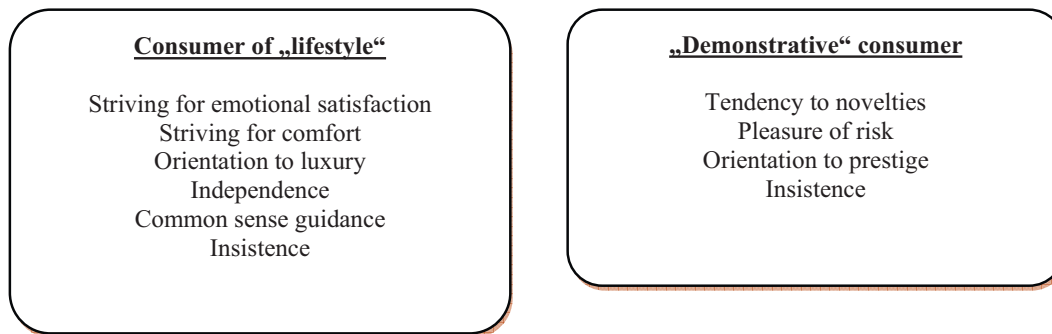
**Luxury goods consumers’ type. Values of con- sumers.** Use of luxury goods and their peculiarities are related to the needs of consumers. The latter, ex- cept other factors, are influenced by a personal value system as well. In such a way evident links of usage of luxury goods and personal values, on which the be-

haviour of consumer and type of consumer depend, is shown. Therefore, seeking to determine and define types of consumers of luxury goods, it was sought to find out value judgements of respondents as well. Using the Likert scale the block of statements was presented for research participants, and it expressed value judgements related to consumption (prepared according to Dubois and Czellar, 2002).

Analysis of research data showed that rese- arch participants indicated such things as originality, having of own style, self-expression, and respect of surrounding people to be the most important. Such things as impression making, seeking to stand out from others and attention of surrounding people was evaluated the least. These research results meet the aspect being emphasized in scientific literature (Ma- ruani, 2007) that luxury goods attributed are one self at first, for satisfaction of inner needs and for self-re- ward.

**Type of consumers.** Seeking to single out and describe the types of consumers of luxury goods the horizontal graphic scale was where by on five point system it was necessary to evaluate different purchas- ing principles stated in different poles.

Research results let distinguish the following featu- res of consumers of luxury goods: independence, common sense guidance, and insistence, strive for comfort, orientation to prestige and luxury, considera- tion, strive for emotional satisfaction (see Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3.** Types of consumers of luxury goods

Consumer of luxury goods is also more tend to novelties than to traditions, prefers risk than safety first. The exclusion of these features of the purchaser lets focus then on two main types of purchasers of luxury goods.

**Analysis of qualitative analysis results.** Results of qualitative analysis were received by the method of a partly structured interview. Analysis of results is focused on the following problematic spheres:

- The conception of luxury;
- The environment of purchasing of luxury goods;
- The peculiarities of usage of luxury goods.

**The conception of luxury.** Trying to formulate the conception of luxury the informants almost in unison noted that luxury in the true-life space is a relative, comparative thing. That means that different people can differently perceive and treat luxury. Its perception depends on many things: receivable income, life experience, needs, the conception of life quality, etc., however, it was acknowledged that luxury possesses some particular obligatory features, which are not easily distinguished. One of the essential aspects of luxury is that it characterizes a persistent value: a thing by the wallet, the expression of its value has one more value, which is usually described not in economic but rather in mystical terms, such as “the spirit of the thing”, “something in that style” and so on. This value of the luxury product is called the symbolic value in literature (Rubavičius, 2003; Catry, 2003). It can be defined by such features as oneness of the thing (handicraft, a piece of work by a famous artist), artistry, uniqueness and so on.

Inter alia, the persistent value is reflected by the history of the luxurious thing, its survival in the flow of time, giving one more additional value, longevity. That is why old, classical things were considered as luxurious by the informants. However, longevity must not be whatever, but artistic: both the spirit of the thing and the material form must be preserved. Consequently, the old dishes and books are classified as the things of luxury.

One more aspect of luxury things, which is very important, is their oneness, artistic outward, usually – handicraft. That means that luxury is not a mass product, it is unique, unitary, distinguished by the external beauty. Luxury charms for its outward, its rarity and artistic features.

Namely high quality, usually production on a small scale influences longevity of the luxury thing, sometimes turning it into the relics, transferred by parents to children, by grandparents to grandchildren.

An important aspect influencing a decision to buy luxury goods is the culture of service. Overall, the informants raised high requirements for service. In sale not only human attention and appropriate communication are important but also politeness, inner culture, the appearance of the seller, clothing, etc. Besides a decision to buy is influenced by the ingenious behavior of selling as well. Ingenuity of the seller of interior goods was mentioned by one of the informants, when buying a luxurious cloth coffee was served and the picture of the purchasers was taken, is a great example how non-standard and atypical behavior of sellers and the service oriented to the needs of the purchaser motivate a decision to buy. Judging from analysis of research data selling luxury goods it is very important that the sellers would be able to meet all the needs of sometimes very crotchety purchasers by their behavior, would let them feel a boss in that situation and the initiator of the purchase. These research results correspond to of quantitative analysis showing that consumers are evidenced as independent, self-starters and strict in terms of luxury goods.

Overall, self-encouragement and award is one of the main factors influencing purchase of luxury goods (see Table 2). Luxurious and high quality things sort of prove high self-view, allowing to fulfill inner need of self-evaluation. “I deserve that” is a common “motto” of consumers of luxury goods. It is like an award for persistent work, having no free time, etc. or that you are special. It is more likely that the latter factor influences if luxury goods are insistently



demonstrated in broad daylight (look, how special I am, what I have got) or are used exclusively in private (this is for me, I deserved that, and it does not concern others).

A persistent search of the right thing is related to self-encouragement and award as well. If you feel that you deserve, so you know the present you deser-

ve and how it should look like. So, this vision formed beforehand of luxury goods is not instantaneous but rather the result of the process. Whereas, impulsive purchase of luxury goods is more connected to the perception and expression of oneself as a special person.

Table 2

**Peculiarities of usage of luxury goods**

Category	Subcategory	Evidentiary statements
Peculiarities of consumer behavior of luxury goods	Purchase as encouragement and self-award	<i>I have already told you that I'd deserved that car. This is a present for me just like encouragement for well done work (A) I bought it for myself, not for others (A) But if they are perfectly done, so I wear and want to wear (B) I was very tired, I've been working hard. Then I've got a chance and we went to Milan, to the interior exhibition. And here are these shoes... Just like fate (C) Maybe she is worth this apparatus, maybe she has been working through nights to buy it? (C) Do you know, I've worked so hard and here you are, I've got it? If I won in a lottery a million I would not be so glad I am glad about that cloth (C) This is sort of respect. To myself, and them. (D) but it is bought for myself – not for anyone else (E)</i>
	Luxury goods „speak for themselves“	<i>The only accent of luxury which is demonstrated in public in the West is the a wedding ring. But it symbolizes more than only the monetary value (E) Obviously, there is a category of people who imitate the so called elite and buy the things they see that others have (E) Why to buy if no one sees? You can walk at home in washed-out nightwear, and if you go out, you have to look appropriately (D) How can you go out in such a frazzle? (D) It means that you blow a raspberry on people, that you don't know how to live with people (D) I wore that suit when I went to the notary. And what do you think? Everyone turned back to look at me (D) When I am among those who care (C) But there is a category who sees everything, who notices and slanders everything (C) What is that label? It shows what, where and how is done (C) or will you go to work in sparklers collar? Then everyone will think that it is false (E) If I want to stand out from others, so I will buy them, if not, I won't buy, I will look for other designer's shoes, simpler ones, I mean the outward (E)</i>
	Non-demonstration of luxury goods	<i>However, most often the things of real luxury are not demonstrated (E) I have grown up from the childish age to go to the yard to boast that my mother bought chocolates for me (B) It's fun when you have a good thing, but you buy it for yourself, not for others (B) I can "deeply spit" if anyone sees or doesn't, it's better for me when no one sees and doesn't know (A) I live my life, others – theirs. In the way they want (A) Whose business is what I have and what I haven't (A) And now who cares that this table is made of oak and not of planed veneer? (A)</i>
	Persistent search for a particular thing	<i>I always know well what I want, but not always can find that (A) You still more or less know what you want, try to imagine something similar and then you walk and look for it (B) And you have to look better. Sometimes it happens that if you don't find here, so you find somewhere else. You know, I've been looking for this jacket for a few months, and then I went to Romania and found it (B) I was looking for a silk scarf; I searched the entire town with my daughter. In one place silk was false, in the other I couldn't find my color, or "so so" made (D) So a person knows what that thing is haven't seen it before, doesn't he? And then he chooses according to his needs and taste what he exactly needs (E)</i>
	Impulsiveness when buying	<i>Usually I plan in advance. But sometimes it happens when I see something and that's it. That thing has to be mine (C) People know how to select, what luxury is and where to get it (D) I saw it and froze. I understood that I will buy it even haven't tried for size (C) I usually plan in advance (C) I couldn't resist buying (C)</i>

## Conclusions

- Analysis of literature sources revealed three main models of consumers' behavior of luxury goods: demonstrative usage, usage of lifestyle and usage promoted by the commodity fetishism. These models of different social nature perform one common function: let identify the individual and design one's own personality while experiencing satisfaction through usage of luxury goods. Here-with, usage of luxury goods fulfills the social and personal needs of the individual, so it is attributed to the function of social importance.
- Result analysis of empirical research showed that usage behavior of luxury goods characterizes some particular features related to the personality of the consumer. The most typical features of are independent decision making, insistence, strive for satisfaction and comfort received from usage. Subject to the intensity of the expression of these features, different behaviors of usage are: "lifestyle" and "reaction". The "lifestyle" model of luxury goods usage is rather based on inner motivation of usage, individual usage is characteristic to it. The "reaction" model of luxury goods usage is rather impulsive, reaction of people round is important, fulfillment of needs is performed through social interaction.
- Usage of luxury goods is significantly related to the inner needs of the personality. A decision to purchase the product can be both planned and spontaneous, however, in all cases it is related to self-award perceived subjectively and gives inner satisfaction.
- The main motivational factors of usage of luxury goods are the inner need, symbolic value of the commodity and the sale environment for which specific requirements are set: it has to correspond to and reflect the context of luxury goods, be aesthetical and attractive, and the behavior of the operating personnel must be humanly attentive. Especially civility, proper presentation of information and ingenious service are appreciated.
- The following main features of consumers of luxury goods forming a conditional picture of the consumer of luxury goods, are distinguished: the consumer is more often of middle age than young, hard working and receiving high income, exceeding the average income of the people in the country. It is characteristic to him/her to be self-confident, independent and highly evaluating him/herself. Usually the consumer of luxury goods has formed a positive "I" view influencing the perception of him/her as a special and precious personality.

- The hypothesis of the research that the inner needs of the personality mostly motivate usage of luxury goods was proved.

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## Vartotojų elgsenos ypatumai prabangos prekių kontekste

### Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje analizuojami vartotojų elgsenos ypatumai prabangos prekių kontekste, siekiant išsiaiškinti, kokie veiksniai turi įtakos prabangos prekių vartojimui, kokiais ypatumais pasižymi prabangos prekių vartotojų elgsena. *Tyrimo aktualumas* grindžiamas šiais argumentais: 1) Lietuvoje išgalinčiomis simbolinio vartojimo postmodernistinėmis sampratomis; 2) utilitariniu vartotojiškos aplinkos kontekstu; 3) prabangos prekių vartotojų elgsenos tyrimų nepakankamumu Lietuvoje.

Prabangos prekių vartotojų elgsena Lietuvoje kol kas mažai tyrinėta. Elitinį vartojimą ir jo santykį su visuomenės socialiniais ekonominiais procesais analizavo Matonytė (2001). Sociologinius vartojimo aspektus, pavyzdžiui, socialinio statuso ir pozicijos demonstravimą, tyrinėjo Leonavičius (2002). Apie kultūrinius ir antropologinius vartojimo veiksnius kaip apie ekonomikos sukultūrinimo padarinius rašė Rubavičius (2003). Vartotojų elgsenos ypatumus, atspindimus vartojimo prekių kontekste, jaunos Lietuvos rinkos sąlygomis išsamiai analizavo Stankevičienė (2004). Parodomoji vartojimo reikšmė aptarta Černevičiūtės (2003; 2006) darbuose.

Prabangos prekių vartotojų elgsenos teorinėje plotmėje išskiriamos trys nuomonės (Černevičiūtė, 2003). Pirmoji, utilitaristinė, teigia, kad prabangos prekių vartojimas yra socialinio statuso įtvirtinimo funkcija. Antroji nuomonė yra individualistinė. Manoma, toks parodomasis vartojimas yra motyvuotas tik asmeniniais poreikiais ir mažai priklauso nuo socialinės ir ekonominės aplinkos. Trečioji, t. y. klasikinė nuomonė, priešpriešinama pirmosioms dviem. Teigiama, kad prabangos prekių pirkimui įtakos turi ir išoriniai (socialiniai), ir vidiniai (asmenybės) veiksniai. Tačiau nėra aišku, kiek prabangos prekių varto-

tojų elgseną motyvuoja parodomoji funkcija, o kiek – asmenybiniai poreikiai.

Teorinės mokslinės literatūros analizės metu išskirti trys pagrindiniai prabangos prekių vartotojų elgsenos modeliai šio straipsnio autorių atlikto tyrimo metu buvo tikrinti remiantis trianguliacijos metodu (teorine analize, kiekybiniu ir kokybiniu tyrimais). Nustatyta, kad prabangos prekių vartojimo kontekste labiausiai pasireiškia du vartojimo tipai: „gyvenimo stilius“, t. y. prabangos prekių vartojimas paremtas vidine motyvacija, ir reakcijos vartojimas, t. y. sąveikos su socialine aplinka ypatumai. Tyrimo duomenų analizė parodė, kad svarbiausiais dalykais tyrimo dalyviai laiko originalumą, savo stiliaus turėjimą, savęs išreiškimą, aplinkinių pagarbą. Mažiausiai vertinami yra išpūdžio darymas, siekis išsiskirti iš kitų ir aplinkinių dėmesys. Tyrimas atskleidė, kad prabangos prekių vartojimas reikšmingai susijęs su vidinių asmenybės poreikių tenkinimu, šie poreikiai yra pagrindinis prabangos prekių vartojimą skatinantis veiksnys. Reikšmingą poveikį prabangos prekių vartojimui taip pat turi prabangos prekės ypatumai ir pardavimo aplinka.

Išskirtini šie pagrindiniai prabangos prekių vartotojų bruožai, sudarantys sąlyginį prabangos prekių vartotojo paveikslą: vartotojas dažniau yra vidutinio negu jauno amžiaus, daug dirbantis ir gaunantis dideles pajamas, gerokai viršijančias vidutines šalies gyventojų pajamas. Jam būdingas didelis pasitikėjimas savimi, savarankiškumas ir geras savęs vertinimas. Dažniausiai prabangos prekių vartotojas yra susidaręs teigiamą „Aš“ vaizdą, turintį įtakos savęs, kaip ypatingos ir vertingos asmenybės, suvokimui.

Tyrimo hipotezė, kad prabangos prekių vartojimą labiausiai motyvuoja vidiniai asmenybės poreikiai, patvirtinta.